

The Heir from New York

— BY —
R. S. JENKINS

A Delightful Story Describing how a
Young American becomes
“Canadianized”



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THE
HEIR FROM
NEW YORK

BY
R. S. JENKINS



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I. NEW RELATIONSHIPS	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
II. MYSTERY	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
III. THEORIES	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
IV. THE FLOOD	-	-	-	-	-	-	69
V. THE LAW	-	-	-	-	-	-	86
VI. CHANGE	-	-	-	-	-	-	102
VII. GRACE	-	-	-	-	-	-	109
VIII. AT ELLSONS'	-	-	-	-	-	-	122
IX. AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE	-	-	-	-	-	-	139
X. NUMEROUS PROPOSITIONS	-	-	-	-	-	-	160
XI. DISCUSSIONS	-	-	-	-	-	-	171
XII. MURIEL	-	-	-	-	-	-	183
XIII. ROYAL MOUNTAIN	-	-	-	-	-	-	201
XIV. THE CLUB	-	-	-	-	-	-	225
XV. THE FIRE	-	-	-	-	-	-	248
XVI. A NEW ACQUAINTANCE	-	-	-	-	-	-	271
XVII. THE ACCIDENT	-	-	-	-	-	-	293
XVIII. CONSTANCE	-	-	-	-	-	-	316
XIX. "EVER AFTER"	-	-	-	-	-	-	345

The Heir from New York

CHAPTER I.

NEW RELATIONSHIPS.

Extract from Dayton Woodford's Diary.

JULY 10. Here history begins. Last night I met the person whom I am destined never to forget. What is the use of any reticence about the matter, especially when I am saying this with nobody to hear but the cold, passionless page? From that hour there has been opened to me a new world, or a new era, if you like, in the old world. Henceforward every tick of the clock carries me forward to bright, unknown events.

There are in this little volume entries of all kinds, college happenings, pleasant hunting trips with congenial companions, and all the etceteras with which a young man fills his years. How oddly they read now! Real life had not yet begun.

But how came I here, my diary friend, in this little city of Royaltown, beyond the northern boundary of our Uncle Samuel's domain? I must briefly fill in the blanks since the graduation banquet in New York, when all the jolly, companionable crowd got together for the last time.

Being the only child of a father with a respectable legal business in a fair-sized city, I had fully

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

expected to begin work in his office and take up the line of succession upon his retirement. But an aunt who lived in Canada died suddenly, leaving me sole heir to her estate. Though she had been a regular visitor at our home while my mother was alive, she had held only occasional communication with my father during later years. Consequently, the disposition which she made of her property was rather a surprise to us, although I was, after all, her nearest relative. I came north as soon as I heard of her death, but my father did not accompany me on account of the lingering results of a severe attack of his malady, rheumatism, which made it inadvisable for him to undertake the journey. My aunt's funeral was very largely attended, because she possessed a wide circle of friends, and besides was somewhat of a lady bountiful in the matter of hospitals and charities.

A few days ago I set about making an inventory of the estate, and I have found that she was an exceedingly clever business woman, and made at various times a number of investments of a very paying kind. As a result of my investigations I have come to the conclusion that I now possess an assured income far beyond any modest expectations I may have formed.

Since my arrival here I have been receiving invitations from the social circle to which my aunt belonged. Last night, at a quiet little affair, where music was the chief feature of the entertainment, I met the young lady whose form and voice can never be effaced from my memory. Shall I describe her? But what votary on whom flashed for a moment the blinding vision of Diana could reduce

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

to words the impression of the loveliness of his goddess? Perhaps some day I may be able to write down in cold black ink the terms that convey indistinctly the sweetness and charm that envelop her beautiful soul as with a garment. How one thinks of her outward form but as an accessory to her inward being of light and love! But, my honest, pale-faced, leather-bound friend, I have already rhapsodized so much that you will be beginning to think me insincere. Therefore let what I have said suffice to reveal the secret that is enshrined in my heart.

A letter from Flava Sheldon to Eileen Evans.

“DEAR EILEEN,—I have the most interesting news for you. A young man, a real young man, has arrived in ‘our midst,’ direct from the great metropolis. You knew dear old Mrs. Phillips, who died recently. It is her nephew, and he has been left heir to all her property. You can imagine what a state of turmoil there has been among the girls. They are of opinion that he is just ‘scrumptious’ looking. There is really not a dissenting voice. As for myself, I have had only one chance to see him. I can’t wait for the moment to tell you how it came about. He is excruciatingly handsome, so handsome that the effect is almost painful. You will no doubt wonder how such an extraordinary thing could be. I think that I can explain. You will remember Major Mason, who we girls used to say was so straight that he was crooked, quite surpassing all the ideals of straightness. This is just the way with Mr. Woodford (that is his name). He surpasses

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

all the ideals of handsomeness that could possibly form in any one's brain.

"He has densely dark hair, and I fancy owns a pair of very expressive eyes. There is, besides, something ducal or viscountal about his whole appearance. I wanted to call him the Duke of New York. But everyone objected, because he is an American gentleman, and only American ladies have titles. The constitution has some provision that bars out the male sex. So we have compromised on the Heir from New York.

"You will be wondering whether I have already lost my heart to him. No, my dear, that precious article of anatomical furniture is still tick-tacking away in the rightful place where nature intended it to be. And this brings me to a point of serious importance. I believe that the general opinion of this community is consigning me reluctantly, but none the less consigning me, to the stately ranks of maiden spinsterhood or bachelor girlhood, or whatever may be the modish phrase for that condition of uncertain sorrows and joys. I truly believe that the ever faithful Charlie Stringer subconsciously counts on my yielding to his persuasions, when it becomes sufficiently evident to me, as it is to everybody else, that he is my last and only 'chance.' But I will not allow myself to marry the boy, because I like him too well in an older sisterly way, and I should consider it too ridiculous for anything to have him for a husband.

"And now I can take time to tell you how I came to get a fleeting and imperfect glimpse of the Heir. He has not been going out very much socially, because it is only a short time since the death of his

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

aunt. But he has met that dearest and loveliest of all girls, Constance Lyman, and has called at her home on several occasions, if what Madam General Gossip says is true. At any rate it was there that I saw him with my own eyes.

"After service on Sunday evening, Charlie Stringer was conducting me more or less in a homeward direction, when occurred one of those catastrophes that fill the young woman's soul with terror. I stopped suddenly, and said to him,

" 'An accident has happened.'

"Charlie's jaw dropped and his mouth opened.

" 'What is it, Miss Sheldon? Can I help?'

" 'No, you can't help. It is an accident to my clothing,' I said solemnly.

"Charlie proceeded to look me over.

" 'Oh, you stupid!' I exclaimed. 'You can't see it.'

"Charlie became more concerned than ever.

" 'Is it serious?' he asked.

" 'Yes, it is serious.'

"Charlie, you know, is a splendid boy, and he became such a picture of dismay on my account that I could not help laughing. Suddenly we noticed that we were not far from Mr. Lyman's residence, and with infinite precaution I made my way thither. Charlie remained in the street. I rang the bell and asked for Constance. She sympathetically bore me off to her room, where all damage was quickly repaired. After refusing her pressing invitation to stay at least for a while, if not for the whole evening, I proceeded to the door. But while passing along the hall, I happened to catch a glimpse of the drawing-room interior, and there sat the handsomest

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

man I believe I ever saw. He was engaged in conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Lyman.

“‘Oh, Constance,’ I almost gasped, ‘who is that?’

“‘Don’t you know? That is Mrs. Phillips’ nephew, Mr. Woodford, who has inherited her property.’

“‘Well, Constance,’ I answered, ‘if he is as good as he is handsome, I am confident that you have at last met a Prince Charming who is worthy of you.’

“‘What strange conclusions you jump to, Flava? I hardly am acquainted with him. I have met him only two or three times.’

“‘What an innocent child you are! But I’ll kiss you two or three times for good luck and say good night.’

“So that is a full and true account of how I came to see Mr. Woodford. You will, of course, be utterly unable to appreciate all this interest in one young man, when, as you will sagely remark, there are many thousands of others in the world. But though we may be growing old, we may not be as wise as you and your excellent doctor. Give my respects to him and all his best paying patients.

“Your truest of friends,

“FLAVA SHELDON.”

These two documents have been given in order to enable the reader to realize that the arrival of Dayton Woodford in Royaltown was likely to be an event of no inconsiderable importance. But Royaltown itself must first of all have the briefest of descriptive paragraphs.

It is a small city on the shore of one of the chain

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

of great lakes that form the international boundary, and is situated at the end of a basin-like plain terminating at the sides in a series of natural terraces which, cultivated or wooded, form a beautiful prospect to the limit of vision. To the northward, and at the further end of the plain, rises a higher elevation which is dignified by the name of "mountain." The limestone of which it is composed has broken away in many places, thus forming large crevasses that sometimes run a considerable distance into the flanks of the hill, and are known to everybody as the "caves." The Clearwater River, a fair sized stream, finds its way through the plain, and empties into the lake about fifteen miles from the city.

Very soon after his arrival Dayton ordered a serviceable motor-car to be sent up to him from New York, and explored the countryside in all its length and breadth. He liked map-making, and, wherever he might be, he always endeavored to "get the lay of the land" and chalk down the results of his investigations as accurately as possible. So he now secured an old map of the county that looked as if it would cover an acre of ground, should he ever dare to unroll it to its full area. The name of the occupant of each farm was duly recorded, and portraits of many apparently intelligent persons were scattered along the margin of the map. One could easily imagine that some clever canvasser had been able to secure a large amount in ready money or in promissory notes from the originals of the portraits. Dayton regarded this array of faces with a certain degree of interest. "Some are born notorious," he remarked, "some achieve notoriety, and some simply buy it."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

He found the old map to be fairly correct in a general way, though sadly out of date as to details. Consequently, he made it the basis of a new one, which he roughly drafted in many sections for greater convenience in carrying about. Where the car was not usable, he pursued his investigations on horseback. He was a good rider, for he had been carefully trained in the art of horsemanship by his father. Many a delightful canter the two had had together during the hours that the lawyer could spare from his business.

Much interesting information Dayton now gleaned in his wanderings about the country. He fraternized very readily with his fellowmen, of whatever rank or education they might be. He had what the everyday man approvingly calls an "off-handed way with him." In fact, he might possibly have had some success as a politician, for the accomplishment of the "glad hand" would have been easy for him to acquire. It was only women that paid much attention to his good looks. Men saw in him merely an athletic young man, with a bright eye and an agreeable manner.

People everywhere got to know him, and he was often invited to call at farm-houses, as he drove or rode along the highways. He took much interest in talking with the older people, and listening to their stories of pioneer days in the community. All that district had been transformed from a wilderness into a scene as "fair as the garden of the Lord" within a space of not more than sixty or seventy years. Consequently, there were some persons yet alive who remembered the dense forest that originally extended, with few "clearings," from the southern

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

to the northern chain of lakes. The tales of early adventure were thrilling and oftentimes tragic.

One story lingered long in his memory, because of the peculiarly vivid way in which it was recounted by the narrator. She was a pleasant-faced old woman, who was resting after her years of toil in the home of her son, one of the prominent men of the district.

“In the days I am telling you about I was only a slip of a girl. Ours was the last house of the settlement. If you went beyond our place, you found yourself right in the bush, and you would not reach another clearing till you got to the upper lakes. One afternoon, I remember it as well as if it was to-day, my father and the boys had not yet come in for their suppers, but we were busy getting things ready for them. All of a sudden my mother looked up and saw a strange man standing at the door. Everybody was good to strangers then, and my mother at once asked him to step in. First it seemed as if he was going away without saying a word. But after looking all around him, he answered my mother in a kind of a scared way. He said he had come a long distance and was hungry. Would the little girl get him something to eat? He came inside then and sat down. But all the time he kept looking at the door. He was a dark man, and seemed to be about middle age. I got something ready for him on the table. Then he started in to eat very fast, but kept always looking around at the door. My mother asked him what the news was out at the front. But he said he had been back in the bush with some friends, helping them at a job of logging, and so did not know very much about what was going on.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

“My mother didn’t say much else to him. Soon he got up from the table, and, after thanking us, went off in a great hurry. It wasn’t long till father and the boys came in, and they had some news to tell. Old Mr. Jennings, who was a justice of the peace, had just got word that there was a reward of forty pounds for the capture, dead or alive, of a man who had committed a dreadful murder. He had killed a man with an axe. We used pounds, shillings and pence then, just as they do in the Old Country yet. I remember well when the change was made. We thought it would be very hard to reckon in dollars and cents, but found it much easier, even before we got quite used to it. Well, to return to my story, the boys remembered the description which they had read from the printed bill Squire Jennings showed them, and it exactly fitted the man who had just been at the house. ‘That beats me,’ said my father, or words to that effect; ‘here in these hard times we could have had forty pounds as easy as not, and at the same time have served the ends of justice, as Squire Jennings would say.’ But my mother somehow took a different view of the matter, and thought that not much good would come of money obtained in such a way.

“Then they began to talk of the chances of the murderer getting clear away without being caught. My father did not think it probable that he would escape. After leaving our place, he would have fifty miles of straight bush before him. But if he got through that safely and reached the lumber camps on the Wasaga River before any report of the murder arrived, he might catch a boat that would take him to some place in the States.

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

"That night we were kept awake for hours by the howlings of the wolves. It really seemed as if there were thousands of them. My father was sure some of our neighbor's sheep had been left out. He got up several times, but couldn't see anything between our house and the dark forest. Next day all around the settlement was found to be safe and in good order.

"We never thought till afterwards of what might have been the cause of the trouble. Word came from the north, after a while, that no stranger had arrived at the shanties, and never from that day to this has anyone seen the murderer. If in that fearful night the wolves killed him, it was certainly just punishment for his crime. Evil things happened in those days, as they happen yet, but I have never known any deed done in wickedness finally prosper, unless some good person saved it, peradventure, as the ten righteous men would have saved Sodom."

The ending sounded to Dayton at first as if it were a precept derived directly from the local pulpit. But, after a moment's reflection, he was not quite so sure. In spite of her quaint use of Biblical language the old woman was probably expressing the ancient belief present in humanity regarding the certainty of the punishment of murderers. This conception seems to be one of the Cyclopean stones that form the foundations of our civilization. Dayton, though not a philosopher, used sometimes to like to rummage about in the cellars of the edifice and unearth proofs in support of some embryonic theories as to man's place in the general scheme of things and kindred topics.

One day he was jogging homeward at an easy pace

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

in his car, enjoying to the full a delightful breeze that blew from the lake and tempered the heat of high noonday, when he caught up with a pedestrian who was stepping sturdily on in spite of his evidently advanced years. It is the inexorable etiquette of the countryside that the person who is driving shall invite the person who is walking to a seat in his vehicle, if there is space unoccupied. But in any event Dayton would have eagerly sought the means of giving assistance to the old man, as he expected to be repaid by the pleasure of inducing him to relate some of the experiences of a long life.

"Good day, sir," he said, "would you like to get in and have a ride?"

"Well, I shouldn't mind a short lift on the road. You have what looks like an easy-running rig, and it's a warm day."

Dayton was about to jump out and help the old man into the car. But the latter stopped him instantly, and sprang in with the agility of a much younger man.

"You youngsters may think that you are pretty smart. But I tell you it is the old dog for the hard road yet." He laughed heartily. "My grandfather at ninety-six could step out with the best of his grandsons and grandnephews, and I am not going to cast discredit on the family by admitting that the race is degenerating. I was walking to my grandson's place down the line, and if you hadn't come along with your fine new machine, I would have made the distance without turning a hair. As it is, I shall arrive in style and surprise the natives."

At once Dayton and he were on the best of terms. The old man began talking about various local mat-

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

ters in a way that was interesting even to a stranger. Finally he said,

"If I am not making too free, may I ask whether you are a married man, an engaged man, or a bachelor?"

Dayton felt a quick stab at his heart. But he answered calmly that he was in the last-named condition.

"Well, now, I might have guessed as much. No wife with such a good-looking husband as you would have let him wander about the country alone in a contrivance like this, tempting fate and all kinds of entanglements; and, if you had been engaged, the girl would have been with you."

Dayton made a laughing reply, remarking that his supposed good looks did not seem to help him much towards changing his present state to a possibly better one.

"Just make up your mind," said the old man, "as to which is the lady you want, and don't be daunted by trifles. Courting is a much easier business in this part of the country now than it used to be when I was young. I will give you an idea of what a serious matter it was some fifty years ago. There lived out Lloydville way at that time two sisters poor Jim Stephens and I had a fondness for. But we were compelled to walk twenty miles, and most of it through the bush, in order to arrive at their father's clearing. The house consisted of a downstairs all in one room and a loft above. When the proper time came, the old folks went up the stairs to bed, and we sat up all night with the young ladies, taking our departure at dawn for the return trip of twenty miles through the woods. It was the only

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

thing that could be done under the circumstances, and in fact everybody was satisfied with the arrangement. People nowadays talk about strenuous times, but the truth is that they don't know what real energy and hard work mean."

By this time they had reached the old man's destination. It was a beautiful place. In front there was a large lawn shaded about by magnificent trees. Back of this stood a red brick house, not too newly built to be out of harmony with its surroundings, and yet of recent enough construction to guarantee the existence of modern comforts within its walls.

At sight of the motor-car and its occupants a feminine person of about fifteen years made her appearance, and welcomed her grandfather with much glee. The two were evidently the best of friends. But almost immediately the old man exclaimed:

"I am going to assume my grandfatherly authority in this family and invite this young gentleman to put his bright-painted cart in a shed and come inside the house. Now, sir, an old man like me does not take 'no' for an answer, when he gives an invitation."

Dayton was rather easily persuaded, for he saw that the invitation was indeed genuine. The mirth-loving eyes of the young girl may also have had their share of influence, for it is hard to set bounds to the subtle power of sex. Thus he was led quite accidentally to make the acquaintance of a family with which he was destined to form the warmest friendship of a lifetime.

While they had been talking, the girl's mother had also come up. There were introductions and ex-

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

planations all around. Dayton learned that the lady's name was Ellson, and that her daughter was called Lotta. Her husband, the old man's son, had been dead for some years, but her son William, who was a young man of unusual ability, had taken charge of the farm at his father's death, and had been very successful in its management.

On the other side, Mrs. Ellson was very much surprised to learn that it was really Dayton Woodford, Mrs. Phillips' nephew, whose acquaintance she was making in this chance way. The hospitality naturally extended to every well-behaved stranger, that splendid tradition from an earlier time, now took a warmer tone. Mrs. Phillips and she had been inseparable companions in schoolgirl days, and in later years no considerable period had ever been allowed to elapse without one paying the other a long and much enjoyed visit. Dayton now stepped into his aunt's place in Mrs. Ellson's affection, and it was certainly no disadvantage to him in feminine eyes that he was a very presentable person. Indeed, she gave him a welcome with almost a mother's pride.

The "cart" was quickly placed in comfortable quarters, and was left to dream of the motor-car's heaven, where the gasoline never fails and the roads are unending, without stone or rut. Then everybody went inside to a delightful airy sitting-room, where heat was banished and only the charm of summer was allowed to enter.

The grandfather asked where William was, and, on being told that he was at the barns with a neighbor on some matter of farm business, decided to go and look him up. He went off with a quick step

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

that was marvellous for a man of his years. Mrs. Ellson remarked that it seemed almost a misuse of terms to call her father-in-law an old man. Lotta for a time busied herself with some books, occasionally glancing up with a friendly smile at her mother and Dayton. But soon she went off to superintend matters in the dining-room, for the hour of luncheon was close at hand.

Mrs. Ellson was a well-informed woman with wide interests, who was quite capable of entertaining in a satisfactory manner the most socially refractory member of either sex. It may be easily understood, therefore, that in Dayton's case no moment of dullness or embarrassment was allowed to intervene before the summons to the dining-room. She spoke about his aunt in the warmest terms of friendship, and showed such a kindly yet not obtrusive interest in the young man's affairs that the latter was reminded of the mother whose care he had known for only a few brief years. With a woman's intuition she divined what was passing in his thoughts, and it was at this moment that was born within her the definite decision to hold towards him as far as could be done by another such a sacred relationship. Truly Dayton's fairy godmother stood beside him that day, and, waving her wand, gave him for her whom he had lost a new mother, who was to be almost as zealous and unremitting in planning his happiness as the other could have been. Before the day was over he was made fully aware that he had found a second home, and the thought was strangely sweet to him. For although his father had been to him all that a father could be, the feminine side of the household had long been represented only by a rather stern

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

and energetic housekeeper, who was the very reverse of maternal in her domestic dealings.

On entering the dining-room with his hostess, Dayton found the elder Mr. Ellson there and with him a young man who was at once introduced as William. While everybody is being seated at table, we have the opportunity of briefly describing the last-mentioned person.

William Ellson could not be regarded as a handsome man, and yet his face, with its slightly irregular features, suggesting the agreeable side of the intellectual, lent him an appearance of rare attractiveness. His hair was light in color, and in his lesser height he contrasted somewhat with Dayton, who was of more than average stature. The American at the first glance was of the opinion that he would like him. But as men rarely leap to each other's arms, either actually or metaphorically, it was only after several visits that the two discovered that they were already close friends.

At table Mrs. Ellson said that dinner was usually eaten at noon in that part of the country, but they were so near the city, and William was so frequently absent for the midday meal, that they had adopted the more convenient habit of having dinner in the evening.

"But I can assure you," Mrs. Ellson continued, "that we have been more than once in danger of losing our popularity hereabout on account of this departure from the local custom. We are regarded as ultra-stylish persons, who are aping city ways. If it were not for our decorous conduct in other respects, we should certainly be very severely condemned. My husband was always a popular man

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

in the district, and William likewise is looked upon with a favorable eye. I believe the innovation is blamed entirely upon the womenfolk. So Lotta and I bear up as bravely as we can under the weight of censure, and the affairs of the household go smoothly on."

Dayton remarked that he could hardly imagine Mrs. Ellson being unpopular, and that the community had seemed to him to be, on the whole, a tolerant one, and disposed to adapt itself to new conditions rather than cling to inconvenient arrangements, merely because they were old.

"It is and it isn't," replied the younger Mr. Ellson. "It seems on occasion to act just as the fancy strikes it. Really you would be surprised at the amount of argument expended on less debatable questions than the hour of performing such an important duty as the eating of a meal. I shall tell you of an amusing instance. The boundary line between this township and the one north of it runs in a certain place over the top of an isolated hill. The main road for a generation dutifully followed the boundary straight up the hill and then down on the other side. The question of the deflection of the road was argued and re-argued. Elections were fought upon it in the two townships, and the anti-deflectors won. It came to be regarded as a sort of confirmed principle of righteousness that all the traffic should mount up towards heaven and then go down again instead of following the easy and lowly course round the valley. At last, however, common sense prevailed, and it was decided that the change should be made. But the anti-deflectors had not fired their last shot. They succeeded in persuading the

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

owners of the neighboring property to oppose the expropriation of the land necessary for the new piece of road. Finally, when the long legal fight was ended, and the two reeves went over to authorize the commencement of the work, they found new and strong fences erected and notices against trespassing prominently displayed. The reeve of the other township, who was anxious not to stir up animosity against himself, and thus endanger future chances of securing votes, was loath to act. But my grandfather, who was our reeve at the time, went to work at once and, ordering the laborers to follow his example, had the obstructions cleared away in short order. So now we and all future generations may drive gaily around the redoubtable hill."

The elder Mr. Ellson laughed heartily. "You can hardly imagine," he said, "how that man looked when we went at the fence and rods of it began to disappear as if by magic. I do not know to this day whether he was in favor of the change in the road or not, so evenly did he keep the balance between the contending parties. He always emphasized the fact that he was acting as the servant of the municipality in all that was done."

Thus the conversation drifted gaily on, but always with an undercurrent of seriousness and genuine feeling which Dayton came to recognize as characteristic of the Ellson family. At the close of the meal the grandfather announced his intention of returning home at once, as he had come only on a little matter of business, with which William and he had already dealt. There were protests from Lotta and her mother, but the old man was laughingly obdurate. "I must get home," he said, "or the folks will think

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

I am lost, stolen or strayed on the lonely roads of the township of Downing. Or perhaps, if they have seen Mr. Woodford's dangerous wagon out on the warpath, they will be afraid I am already on the way to the coroner's."

Dayton hereupon offered to take the old man home in the car in order to prove to everyone that his machine was sufficiently domesticated to be allowed to go freely abroad. This immediately evoked from the members of the family the most pressing invitation to return at once after conveying Mr. Ellson home and spend the afternoon and evening at the farm.

"You will be particularly Lotta's and William's guest to-day," said Mrs. Ellson, "for I know that young people like to talk with one another without the disturbing presence of their elders. But I am going to claim you at another time, if you can put up with an old woman's chatter and fancies for a while."

Dayton felt more than willing to accept, and there seemed to be no serious reason to be urged why he should not yield to his desire to become better acquainted with this charming household. So it was agreed that he was to return at once, spend the afternoon, have dinner, and then drive home in the early evening.

On the way Mr. Ellson was particularly interested in the running of the car. Dayton explained its working, showed how easily steered it was, and made it climb a hill at a good speed to the old man's great admiration.

Mr. Ellson then told the reason of his interest. "I am fairly well-to-do," he said. "I happened in the

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

early days to acquire a certain amount of property in the town, and, not having any pressing need for money, I just held it, because there was less trouble in holding it than in selling it. Of course now the property is of considerable value. A man at my time of life cannot look forward to having future pleasure with his money. He must enjoy it now or never. I believe the best way I can enjoy some of it is by spending it for the benefit of others. So I am thinking of making a present to Lotta of the finest motor-car I can buy. There is an Englishman on William's farm who knows all about these machines. In fact he was a chauffeur for a while in the Old Country. Therefore, it will not be like giving a white elephant to the young lady. She will be able to make full use of the car from the first."

The upshot of the matter was that Dayton received a commission to import into His Majesty's Dominion the best machine that artisans of the great Republic could produce. As a result, a certain young person a few weeks later was thrown into such a state of ecstasy that when she was awake she was afraid she was dreaming, and when she was dreaming she was afraid she might be awakened.

CHAPTER II.

MYSTERY.

On his return to the farm Dayton found Lotta waiting for him. She said that William had been called away on some important business and would not be back till dinner. So she was to act as her brother's representative as well as in her own capacity as junior hostess.

Dayton looked at the fair young girl before him, no longer a child and yet not a woman, but in some delightful intermediate stage, like the morn in its dewy freshness before the onrushing glory of the day.

"How really charming you look, Miss Ellson!" He did not refrain from expressing his admiration, because he saw enough of the child in her to feel little of the constraint that habitually held him while in the company of "beautiful goddesses" gowned and moulded in more or less Parisian fashion. He was conscious of being able to talk with Arcadian freedom in the presence of this bright being of the fields and the sun, taught and yet not spoiled in the strict schools of convention.

"Oh, Mr. Woodford, how I like you to say that! I just love to be praised. It makes me feel so happy and not the least little bit proud. I think we shall be the best of friends. I can truly say the nicest things about you, too. Now, if I were a fully grown-up young lady, I shouldn't be allowed to speak my

MYSTERY

mind like that. But of course I do not pretend to be a young lady yet."

"I hope you will try to stay as you are and not grow up for a while. Do you know I sometimes do not like young ladies?"

"I *am* surprised. I thought all young men liked young ladies, and were contemptuous of children."

"Young men are at heart afraid of those beautiful beings. There are of course many brilliant exceptions, but I am not one of them."

"I really cannot imagine you being afraid of anyone or anything, no matter how handsome or terrible. But let us go 'hand in hand together,'"—she stopped suddenly and blushed—"I don't mean literally but metaphorically, out of this gate and through the orchard. I have been trying to quote from a most delightful story I am reading." She smiled. "But my quotation does not fit well." Then she went on. "It is hard to find a nice new story now. The writers put such dreadful things in them. And you cannot tell that these are there until you have read the book. Some of the stories that were not very good were admitted into the Royaltown public library by mistake, and there was a great deal of complaint until finally they were put out. Some even were bought for the Sunday School library, and there was an awful fuss. The librarian felt very bad about the matter. But it was not her fault. She merely ordered some books that were highly praised by people. My mother has asked me not to read anything except what she thinks I ought to read. So she finds out about all the nicest stories and gets them for me. I would not read any others for worlds."

Dayton now felt as if he were really in Arcadia, or

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Utopia, or some other strange region not charted on the maps of the everyday world. A mother so watchful and a daughter so obedient! He thought of the scene familiar at the lending library. "Sweet young things" holding in their hands romances whose authors have imaginings far beyond the fevered details of the most harrowing suit for alimony; fair lips making comments upon these stories—this one was "good," that one was "most interesting," another was "positively enthralling." Small wonder if he never guessed that there were thousands who had not bowed the knee to Baal or rather to the "great goddess Lubricity."

When Lotta and Dayton had passed through the orchard, they came upon an open field sloping down to a veritable gem-like lake all asparkle in the brilliance of the early afternoon sun. Towards the further end was seen the daintiest of islands with a fairy summer-house amid its trees. A little beyond was an extensive wood forming in that direction the boundary of the rippling sheet of water.

"What do you think of my dearest possession? In the summer I float upon it in my shallop light, and in the winter I whirl about it with steel-shod feet and on the wings of the wind. Noble lord, I am the Lady of the Lake."

She gave utterance to this bit of fancy with mirthful eyes before which any young man but Dayton, triple-armed in his love for Constance, would have gone down in irrevocable defeat. But Lotta was wholly unconscious of her ability to exert any magic influence. She was simply aware of being in the best and happiest mood, with a grown-up friend beside her who was considerate of her youth. That the

MYSTERY.

friend was handsome, young, and of the male sex, only made the situation somewhat unusual and added to the zest of the moment.

Their path led to a boathouse on the shore, and Lotta selected her boat from three that were there. After they were seated in it, they "drifted out upon the tide," as Lotta said.

Dayton expressed his surprise and admiration at the beauty of the lake, the existence of which he would never have suspected.

"No, you cannot see it from anywhere outside of our farm, unless you were up in a balloon or an aeroplane. My brother for years wanted to have a lake here, ever since he first studied physical geography, and went over the farm investigating (as he grandly told me) its drainage system. I was only a little girl then, and I thought his talk was very learned. He found out that this had been a lake long ago, and that our stream ran through it then just as it is made to do now. But in time it had changed its course a little and had cut a deeper bed for itself elsewhere. So the lake had finally dried up and disappeared. William discovered that by digging a short channel from a place a little way up the stream he could send the water in this direction and bring back the lake again. But this was once our best pasture-field (it seems funny to think that we are floating over it now), and my father said that he could not afford to give it up. Not long ago, however, William bought the next farm, and, as we now had plenty of land, he decided to do what he had wished to do when a boy. The lake is really common property, though it is called after me 'Lotta's Lake.' But the island is my own peculiar possession, and I

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

call it 'Ellen's Isle.' Nobody is supposed to go there unless I specially invite him. Even William pretends that he has no right to land without the permission of the 'princess of the island.' I often invite him but he hardly ever comes. He says that he has so much to do with the land that, when he has a little time off, he wishes to bid good-bye to old *terra firma* and go floating on another element. He gets some books, puts an awning over his boat, and has a long glorious afternoon. I like then to lie in a hammock on the island and read too. When we are not reading we call out jolly things to each other. For William is very amusing when he is not pondering over crops and scientific reports."

Soon Lotta asked Dayton to row over to the island. "You are the guest of the princess and must certainly be invited to Ellen's Isle."

When they landed, Dayton found that the summer-house was more extensive than from a distance it would have been judged to be. There were also two parts to it. One was largely open to the weather, but the other was solidly built and possessed a grate. Moreover, the floor of this latter portion of the building was covered with a bright-colored rug. A little dainty furniture was to be observed, and most prominent of all a pretty bookcase crammed with books. The room, as Lotta informed him, was the "dearest, cosiest" spot imaginable in the winter. Dayton looked at the books, and saw by their titles that they were chiefly works of travel, poetry and fiction in the serviceable and extraordinarily cheap editions which are the crowning glory of our time. A delightful collection it was! He also noticed the graver-looking backs of some school books, for Lotta

MYSTERY.

was a pupil at the Royaltown Collegiate Institute. She told him that this was her out-of-doors library.

"I have also an indoors one," she said, "a pretty little room upstairs. My brother will bring you up soon, for we entertain each other there regularly."

"You are evidently a lover of books, Miss Ellson. Does your brother also like reading?"

"Oh, I like reading only in the ordinary way. But I would think that my brother lived for that alone, if he did not work so hard in a laboratory he has and was not doing all kinds of splendid things on the farm. He sleeps in *his* library. He says he must have his books where he can get at them whenever he wants them. So he will not have a separate bedroom."

"Does Mrs. Ellson like reading, too?"

"Oh, yes. Mother has a beautiful library next her dressing room, where I like to go and have long talks with her. She sometimes writes pretty stories for the papers, and I love to have her read them to me before they are printed."

"Do you know, Miss Ellson, this is most extraordinary. I never could have believed it, unless I had actually known it to be true. Your family is what the wise men in the early nineteenth century foresaw in their dreams, when they prophesied the result that would arise, if a general system of education were established and the great and good books of the world became cheap and plentiful. How disappointed they would be over most of us, who seem scarcely ever to rise above the screaming trivialities of the Sunday supplement!"

"Sometimes people do think that our family is peculiar. But we all like reading, and we should

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

consider it just as awkward to be all using the same brush and comb as to have only one copy of ordinary books for everybody, especially when they are so cheap. Of course expensive books are kept in the big library downstairs that used to be my father's."

"You have another library! I cannot sufficiently express my amazement. Might I ask you to tell me a little about your father?"

"It is nearly four years since he died. He was never a strong man. He was English Master in the Collegiate Institute for a while, but his health failed. So he bought this farm which was then quite a small one. He found that the life in the open air helped him very much. William, who was a splendid scholar at the Collegiate, far better than his sister is now, did not go into a profession, as everybody expected, but went to the Agricultural College instead. I believe it was partly through my father's advice, because he was afraid of William's health, and partly because my brother likes all things that have to do with farm life. I remember that everybody laughed when I, after hearing what kinds of studies are taken up in such an institution, and understanding only a little of what was told me, said that William was going to the pig-and-cow college."

They had now come out of the summer-house and were standing under the trees, gazing back towards the house. Suddenly Lotta exclaimed, "Look! Mother has just come out on the balcony." The girl waved her handkerchief gaily, and an answering signal came back. "I knew she would see us at once, because she would be certain where we had gone."

MYSTERY.

They then seated themselves in delightfully comfortable out-of-doors chairs.

"Oh, I love it here!" Lotta said. "This is the time when the day is peculiarly rich and golden. The sunlight no longer dazzles, but is gorgeously splendid instead. Does it not make you think of the land where it was 'always afternoon'? The scene may be different, but the atmosphere is the same."

"Yes," answered Dayton, "I feel like an out-and-out lotus-eater. Nothing could be more charming than this fairy island of yours at this 'witching hour' of the daytime. The breeze seems to die down, as if there were some enchantment abroad. I should scarcely be surprised if a translucent water-sprite rose out of the mirror-like surface yonder and held converse for once with mankind."

"The enchantment has the same effect upon you as it has upon me," she said in a delicious tone of childish make-believe. "But it often acts quite differently with other people. Some of my girlfriends become unbearably sentimental, some grow fidgety, and some just go to sleep. I am at times half angry with them on a hot afternoon. Yet they are all dearly lovable, and I no doubt often try them sufficiently with my failings. Just this moment I have thought of something that I have to tell you, but I wish you to wait for half-an-hour while the fairies are passing."

Dayton joined merrily in the pretty game. It was so pleasant to follow the child's lead out of the matter-of-fact world.

"You are a teasing princess-fairy," he said. "But I will wait ten million years, till the brooks run back to their sources and the grass grows downward."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"No, no, my lord, not so long. But one half hour as measured by mortals."

How eloquent of trust and comradeship was the silent interval! Such was Dayton's thought. Then he, too, floated away on the current of day-dreams. But all the water-sprites and fairies finally merged into the form of Constance Lyman. Beside her stood her father. Suddenly out of the mists loomed a dark figure that struck at him. Then Constance threw her arms about her father's form.

Dayton started up.

"Oh! you drowsy knight," he heard Lotta saying. "I am much afraid that the enchantments of the fairy island have been too strong for you, for I do not believe you had pleasant dreams. But this is what I was to tell you. A number of the girls are coming out from town to have dinner with us this evening. They will take the electric car which passes at a little distance from our farm, and then they will walk up through the fields. I am so glad that you will have an opportunity of meeting some of my best friends."

Dayton, who still felt somewhat under the influence of the emotions of his startling vision, strove to forget the unpleasant impression by entering into a long, humorous account of his apprehensions at the prospect of meeting the young ladies.

But Lotta would not listen. "You are just joking, Mr. Woodford. William sometimes says similar things. But when the time comes, he seems to be quite at home and to enjoy himself thoroughly. We girls are all very special friends, and, if any one recommends a person to the others, every one of us tries to be as agreeable as possible to him or to her,

MYSTERY.

whoever it may be. I am going to recommend you most cordially, and you will find yourself in all our good graces. So if you are nice and agreeable yourself (which I know you will be), you need not be the least little bit afraid of us at all."

She gave him a glance of merry protest. Then they walked back to where the boat was lying. Dayton took up the oars, and they were soon across the lake. At the orchard gate Lotta asked Dayton to follow the path to the lawn, while she went off to meet her friends, who must by this time be on their way through the fields.

On reaching the lawn, Dayton was rather surprised to find a large table already spread for dinner. A man, a woman and a young girl were busy with preparations for the meal, constantly coming and going from the house. Mrs. Ellson was sitting in an easy chair. She cast now and then a glance at the table to see how matters were going forward.

As soon as she noticed Dayton, she beckoned to him to come and seat himself in a chair beside her.

"I suppose," she said, "Lotta has told you that we are to have a number of her friends to dinner. It will be so much pleasanter to be outside the house this warm evening that I have had the table set on the lawn."

Dayton remarked that he could not imagine a dinner amid more charming surroundings. It was all like a glorified picnic.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Ellson, "James approved of the idea as soon as I suggested it to him."

"I suppose that is your caterer who is directing operations at the table."

"Oh, no, we really could not afford to be so

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

stylish as to bring a caterer from town. That is only our house manager, and those others are his wife and daughter. You will probably not understand, unless I explain how William has divided the work of the farm. All has come about quite gradually. We always found great difficulty in securing suitable help indoors. At last we engaged as cook a married woman who with her husband and children had shortly before arrived from England. The husband worked on the farm during the summer and went as cook to the lumber camps in the winter. Of course this was not satisfactory, and William at last decided to employ him permanently in the house, giving him enough duties in the dairy and at the barn to make the arrangement a profitable one. A comfortable house has been erected for the family, and they have a small garden-plot of their own. They are very agreeable people, and we get on splendidly. William pays them good wages, and they are well satisfied. The result is that Lotta and I have become great ladies with leisure for congenial occupations and without the harrowing anxieties that are so frequently the lot of women-folk on a farm. The daughter, who is a bright girl and is in the same class as Lotta at the Collegiate, gives excellent service as a maid when she is not at school. There is also a son who is our field manager's assistant, when he is home from the Agricultural College where he is taking a course. As you may imagine, these and other arrangements have sometimes caused a little comment in the community. Some persons were at first inclined to regard William as a "kid glove" farmer, but he is making money and this fact effectively silences criticism. Occasionally, however, he

MYSTERY.

is bantered in a good-humored way about his progressive ideas. He is accustomed to reply that he is not trying to be a twentieth-century farmer like most of his friends, but wishes to belong to the twenty-first century and enjoy life as their descendants will some day. But, Mr. Woodford, I am afraid I am wearying you with all these details about things that can have no possible interest for you."

"No, no, Mrs. Ellson," replied Dayton. "All that you have told me is intensely interesting. I am of the opinion that Mr. Ellson was perfectly right in saying that he was a twenty-first-century farmer. But the arrangements seem so easily made and so obvious, especially where a man has a good piece of property, that it is hard to understand why more people do not live in the twenty-first century. All that seems required is adequate technical knowledge, some business ability and the will."

"William would be delighted to hear you speak in that way. Those are exactly his ideas. You must be sure to visit us again soon. Your aunt and I were such friends that I feel as if we must be friends as well. I should like you to consider this as your home whenever you care to come out to us."

"I cannot thank you too much, Mrs. Ellson, for your kindness. I have had such a welcome here as I could never have expected to find anywhere. I shall be only too glad to come as often as you will receive me."

"Willing to receive you! There could be no unwillingness. For you the latch-string is always out. And that reminds me that the modern representative of the latch-string is the latch-key.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

I shall ask James to supply you with one. It would be too bad to have you come and not be able to get in, should we all be for the moment absent. The back part of the house is never locked and generally some one is to be found there, but it will be better for you to be independent of chance. Besides, I shall make ready for you the rooms next to William's which your aunt used to occupy whenever she visited us. It will be pleasant for you to have apartments specially your own always prepared, which you can go to at once."

"Mrs. Ellson, it is quite impossible for me to thank you sufficiently. I must surely give up the attempt as a vain one. I am occupying my aunt's beautiful house, but its very magnificence depresses me, especially as death has entered it so recently. I have felt as if I were homeless in a strange land. What happy fate led me to your house to-day I do not know. I cannot, even if I wished, resist accepting your wonderful invitation. Some time perhaps I may hope to be able to repay you in a slight degree."

"I am repaid already by your acceptance. I should have been grievously hurt if your aunt's nephew had refused."

Just then entered the merry troop of youthful ladies. They had come up through the orchard under Lotta's guidance and had gone into the house by a side door. Consequently, those on the lawn had not been aware of their arrival until they appeared in their full immaculate loveliness, all signs of travel having been carefully removed. A moment after this graceful irruption, William arrived, and was at once surrounded by the dainty,

MYSTERY.

summer-clad figures. He was evidently very popular with these young people. Then the whole group moved forward in the direction of Mrs. Ellson and her companion.

Dayton was introduced with due formality. At once he was made aware that Lotta's recommendation had indeed been cordial. Everyone treated him in the most charming way, as if he had been a friend of long standing. About him he felt the intense atmosphere of youthful high spirits. He was constrained to throw off the few additional years which he possessed beyond the others, and become for the moment as one of them. William, he observed, seemed quite at home with this younger crowd and yet just as intellectual as ever. The scholarly spirit so permeated his personality that in none of the relations of life, however ordinary or even frivolous they might appear, could it depart from him. Yet it did not dull but brighten the enjoyment of himself and others. All that he said and did had about it a distinctiveness which subtly influenced everybody in the company. It was clearly evident that this young man was endowed with the magic power of leadership, should he ever care to exercise it.

Dinner was now announced as ready, and the happy company took their seats about the table. What fun there was! What jolly remarks were made! How merry was the laughter! Dayton was placed between two young ladies, and was told that one was beautiful and the other was clever. Would he decide which was which? He extricated himself from the dreadful predicament by asserting that each of his companions possessed the qualities of

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

beauty and cleverness in equal degree. What delight there was at the question and the answer!

They got to propounding conundrums and investigated the condition of Dayton's education with respect to this branch of study. It was found that he knew all about the "ink-lined plane," but was not correctly informed as to the oldest "express company." They concluded that his knowledge of Scripture was not satisfactory. One fair examiner asked him whether St. Peter or St. John could run the faster. Dayton had to confess his ignorance. Then he was surprised to learn that it was recorded that "John outran Peter" on a certain occasion.

After this the girls began talking about what they had been doing during the week. Dayton and William were enlightened as to the melancholy fact that vacation was nearly half gone already, and hardly any of the things that had been planned to be done had actually been accomplished. When this subject had been thoroughly discussed in its length and breadth, incidents that concerned persons came up for consideration. Dayton learned for the first time the names of a number of young people in town. The most interesting and likeable seemed to be Charlie Stringer, who was teller in a branch of the Dreadnought Bank in the "rhubarbs," as the girls said he invariably described the outlying part of the city in which he was doing business and which was a region largely devoted to market gardens.

Here a bright young lady with a lovely shade of ribbon in her hair gave utterance to a decided grievance. She had been in Charlie's bank, getting a cheque cashed for her mother. While the transaction was in progress, she had told Charlie that she

MYSTERY.

had just heard a new definition of a bank clerk. Of course Charlie had wanted to know what it was. She had said it was this: "A bank clerk is a young man who stands at the wicket of a financial institution in the intervals between pink teas." Charlie had thought that the definition was a really good one.

"But Marie Davis and Dolly Stater were standing near," continued the girl with the beautiful ribbon. "You know Marie is a stenographer at Green's, and she was in the bank on some business or other. I heard her say quite loud to Dolly that some little girls were very forward and pert. Now I thought that was real mean of Marie. I have known Charlie Stringer for ages, and we are always trying to have a joke on each other." There was an emphatic toss of the head at the conclusion.

Dayton was tremendously delighted at hearing this, but wisely refrained from any remark. The grievance was evidently too real to be treated lightly. But the young lady was quickly consoled by the outspoken sympathy of her companions, and the incident was considered as closed.

Soon, however, Dayton's attention was arrested by hearing the name of Constance Lyman. He discovered that most of the girls were in her class at Sunday School. She was evidently a great favorite with them, and was regarded as a model of what a grown-up young lady should be. Suddenly he was much startled by a remark that was made. Lotta was speaking. She said that she had noticed that Miss Lyman appeared somewhat sad of late. She thought this was very strange, for always till quite recently no person could have looked more bright and happy on all occasions. Some of the other girls

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

had observed the same change, but there seemed to be nothing that could account for it, and so they had believed themselves mistaken, and had dismissed the thought from their minds. Every one hoped that Miss Lyman was not in ill-health.

Dayton's experience of the afternoon was still too fresh for him not to feel a vague foreboding that something was going wrong in which either Mr. Lyman or Constance herself was concerned. But perhaps, after all, here was simply a chance coincidence between two events. If it had extended to three, he would have felt more anxious. Was it not foolish to give way to superstitious fancies? A slight and transitory touch of ill-health might account for what the girls had noticed. He was, of course, confident that the best medical assistance would be secured, if it was needful. And yet—— what if there were a serpent under the roses? How much did he know of the concealed forces behind the brilliant life to which he had been so suddenly introduced? Had he not in other communities become aware of hidden struggles and tragedies, terrible in their results, crushing out the life of age and dulling the splendor of youth? Yet he must dismiss such ideas in the present case. There seemed, so far as he could surmise, no tangible reason for any apprehension whatever.

Soon dinner was over and everybody arose from the table. The girls went off with Lotta to the lake. Mrs. Ellson, Dayton and William walked about the lawn together for a short time, enjoying the delicious coolness of the evening. Then Mrs. Ellson excused herself, for she had to attend to some matters indoors. William and Dayton chose seats in

MYSTERY.

a comfortable spot, and discussed the political situation in the United States. What would be the action of the President of the Republic in certain eventualities? What were likely to be the developments of the next few years in public affairs? Dayton found that William had, for a foreigner, a good knowledge of American politics. The fact is that the peculiar half-European, half-American position of Canada makes it natural for the well-informed citizen of that country to have an acquaintance not only with his own national affairs, but also with those of Great Britain and the United States. What is happening in Birmingham or in California may easily have a direct influence upon his welfare. One will hear more discussion of international questions among ordinary people in such cities as Montreal and Winnipeg than perhaps anywhere else in the world.

At last William noticed that James Glover, the house manager, had come out on the lawn, evidently with the desire of speaking to him. So he walked over to where the older man was, and after a short conversation returned with him to Dayton. The two were introduced to each other. James smoked habitually, and was encouraged to produce his pipe. Neither William nor Dayton was a devotee of the weed. James talked about his life in the Old Country, comparing it with his experiences in the new. Altogether he had seen a great deal of the world, and especially of its unpleasant side.

It was not long, however, till the girls returned, and preparations began to be made for going back to the city. Dayton immediately offered the services of his motor-car. After prolonged and ex-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

cited discussion it was arranged that those who lived in the same part of the city as Dayton should go back in his car, while the others should be conveyed by William's horses to the nearest station of the Electric Transit Company. James told Dayton that, as he had been a chauffeur, he would be glad to get out his car for him. William, too, went off to see that the other means of transportation was provided.

Dayton felt a light touch on his arm. He looked round. It was Lotta.

"Will you spare me ten minutes of your valuable time?" was what she said.

Dayton replied, "Most willingly, Miss Ellson."

She led him into the house to a little reception-room. They remained standing.

"When mother told me," she said, "that you were to come here just as your aunt used to do, and be like one of the family, I felt I could not let you go without telling you how glad I am and what charming times I am sure we shall have, whenever you can come out to see us. I am going to be a sister to you. Does not that sound funny? But it is the other kind of sister I mean. A real, true, unsentimental sister." Then they laughed with the jolly, light-hearted *camaraderie* of youth.

"We will shake hands upon it, Lotta," said Dayton.

"It is to be eternal friendship and fraternity, Dayton," answered Lotta.

"It is a solemn compact," returned Dayton. "But truly you cannot, Lotta, fully understand how grateful I am to your mother for admitting me to the charmed circle of her household."

MYSTERY.

They had gone to the door together while he was speaking, and there they met the others who were hastening in to get their wraps for the homeward journey. Perhaps some of those bright young ladies were of opinion that they had come unexpectedly upon a lovers' scene.

After the last dainty bit of femininity had been safely restored to her parents' home, Dayton directed his car toward his own house, pondering the while over the events of the day. By no process of reasoning was he able to free himself from the feeling of apprehension regarding Constance. He drove partly up the carriage-way and suddenly halted, having determined to think out the problem there and then. The idea occurred to him that it might be well to go and see her that evening. But he remembered at once that she was to be absent till quite late. She had told him the day before that she intended paying a visit to a friend in another part of the city. If he could but have seen her, he would, he was confident, have been much reassured in mind.

It was really becoming unbearable. The more he reflected upon the matter, the more apprehensive he grew. He felt that he could not sit peacefully down in the house in his present perturbed condition. He would turn his car round, and take a quiet run, until he should become calmer and more able to control himself. He chose a road which swept in great curves about the lake, sometimes approaching quite close to the beach, and at other times swinging far inland to an elevated ridge that gave a wide prospect over the moonlit waters. As soon as the city streets were left behind, the highway became deserted. The soil thereabout was

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

stony with outcroppings of rock, and of little use for agricultural purposes within a mile of the shore. Indeed, hardly any of the land was enclosed.

Soon traces of habitation ceased. Only now and then was observed the cavernous blackness of a gravel-pit or the flash of the moonlight on a pool in an abandoned quarry. Wherever there was sufficient depth of soil a scrubby "second growth" spread, the paltry successor of the original forest that the woodman's axe had swept away. Though the scene would have been commonplace in the daytime, it became, under the witchery of the moon, a realm of soft lights and misty shadows. And always on one side, near or distant, stretched the vast expanse of the inland sea with its glorious pathway of radiance. A gentle breeze sighed amid the foliage and passed out upon the water in an enchanted whisper.

Dayton was going at a good pace along the road, which happened at the time to be at its furthest point from the beach, when his eye detected in the distance two figures at an old landing-place, from which the product of a large quarry had once been shipped. He saw the figures suddenly grapple, saw or thought he saw the flash of something bright, and then—could it be true?—one seemed to fall over the side of the wharf into the waters of the lake. Just at this moment the course of Dayton's car brought a clump of trees into such a position as to cut off the view. The road ahead sloped rapidly downward. So he ran his car back to the place where the view was unobstructed. But look as he might, there was absolutely nothing to be seen.

MYSTERY.

It need hardly be said that Dayton was startled. Was this reality or was it another warning vision? Was it a trick of the moonlight or had he been the witness of a murder? It was necessary to find out at any cost. There would certainly branch off from somewhere close at hand a road leading down to the old wharf. But to discover it required some time. At last Dayton perceived it running off at an unexpected angle amid the clumps of cedars. It was evidently long disused, but he succeeded with considerable difficulty in driving the car along it. Finally he reached the waterside.

He alighted and examined all the surroundings. There was certainly nobody in sight. Of course it would be easy for a regiment to conceal itself in the high bushes that grew everywhere close up to the beach. Many tracks were to be observed in the sand. Some might be fresh, but others were certainly old. It was evident that the spot was occasionally visited by people in boats from the city, as well as by persons driving or walking along the shore.

There was no sign of any struggle. He looked at the flooring of the wharf. No traces of blood could be seen. A couple of planks had recently been torn up. The flat pieces of wood floating at some little distance might be these. He noticed that the remaining planks were so rotten that he could have torn up half the wharf in a few minutes. It would have afforded satisfaction to the detective instinct to take a look at those bits of timber in the water, but opportunity was lacking, for boat there was none and he was a poor swimmer. Nothing else could

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

be discovered that was in the least suspicious. If there was a secret, it was being kept securely within the dark depths of the water.

At last Dayton came to the conclusion that further investigation was useless. He was now very much inclined to think that his eyes had been deceived by the slightly swaying shadows of some trees. His highly excited fancy had been responsible for the rest. But, extraordinary thought! Here was the coincidence between the three events. Could he fail to be impressed by the quickness with which his objection had been answered? Was it right to accuse him of superstition, if he paid heed to the warning apparently repeated for the purpose of convincing him? Truly he was lost in a maze of perplexity.

Nothing, however, was to be gained by lingering about. Consequently, he drove back to the main road and started homeward at high speed. All the calm beauty of the night seemed to have changed into something mocking and terrible. He wanted to get away from it and wrestle with his problem undisturbed. On reaching home, he went to his room and sat long in deep thought.

The time is some days later. The place is at a distance from the land, which is dimly in sight. It is a lone spot in the lake, for the direct course of ships lies much to the one or the other side. But what is that afloat and heaving with the slow motion of the swell? Ripples raised by the breeze lap about it. The nearer one draws the more it seems human. But in the name of the mercy of God, do

MYSTERY.

not draw too near! That horrible thing was once the breathing image of the Divine. Now it is low as the brute that is dead, a morsel of uncleanness slowly dissolving. Above moves still the glorious pageant of the clouds. About is the beauty of the dancing waters. Soft tunes are playing on the flutes of the wind.

One of Dayton's visions was not a dream!

CHAPTER III.

THEORIES.

EARLY on the morning following his adventure, Dayton was surprised by the appearance of a visitor who proved to be no less a personage than Charlie Stringer. He came as a special messenger, with an invitation to join a party which was going over to Port Clearwater, at the mouth of the Clearwater River.

Miss Sheldon and some friends, Charlie said, had thought of the matter just the evening before. He mentioned the names of those whom it was intended to invite. The Lymans and the Ellsons were among the number. Messages were being sent to everybody that morning. It was thought that a jolly crowd could be got together, and the weather was all that could be desired. A number of other parties were also going, and so there was every prospect of a pleasant time on the way over. They would take the regular ferry steamer, the "Laconic," at one o'clock. She was not a "bad old tub," though she was rather slow.

In Dayton's eyes Charlie's youthful, good-humored face assumed a supernatural amiability, and a halo revolved just above his curly hair. He seemed like a messenger direct from heaven. Now it would be possible to see Constance in the easiest and most natural way, and discover if anything serious were

THEORIES

amiss. Dayton was certain that the quick eye of love would at once discern whether cause for alarm existed. He was determined to rid himself of this torturing uncertainty by some means or other before the day was over. Through careful and adroit enquiry he learned from Charlie that Constance and her brother had already accepted the invitation. Lotta Ellson also had telephoned down that William and she would be of the party.

After receiving Dayton's acceptance, Charlie hastened off to call upon some more of those whom it was proposed to invite. The rest of the morning was a busy period for Dayton. He had to clear off some necessary business and write a number of important letters. The morning newspapers lay in an untouched pile awaiting a time of greater leisure. A short time after twelve o'clock he had himself driven to the wharf, and went on board in the hope of finding Constance among the early arrivals. But he was for the moment disappointed. She had not yet come down. During the interval he took a survey of the boat.

The "Laconic" was a handsome, roomy steamer, and had been built for the regular lake traffic. Charlie's remarks about her were to be regarded as the habitual disparagement of youth. She was, however, not a fast ship, and had been in consequence somewhat unprofitable to her owners, except in the easy-going service to which she was at present assigned. As she was now a day boat, apartments of considerable size had taken the place of most of the former staterooms. These were prettily furnished as sitting-rooms, and any large party found it convenient to engage two or three for the trip.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Dayton gained this information in the course of a few minutes' talk with one of the officers.

At last, near the time for departure, came those of the party in whom Dayton was specially interested. Constance was looking more than usually beautiful, he thought. Surely all his fears were empty as the dreams from which they were born. And yet did there not seem to be some trace of effort amid all her gaiety and lightheartedness?

After the first few words of general conversation among the party he had no difficulty in securing her for a little walk about the vessel. When he was close to her he fancied that she was somewhat paler, now that the first excitement of arrival was over.

They had grown intimate enough to be able to treat each other frankly as good friends, though no word of love had yet been spoken. Dayton would ere this have been driven by the strength of his passion to make an avowal, had he not been held back by many considerations, the force of which he was compelled to regard. Was it wise or right to require a young woman, especially one who had shown every kindness to him as a stranger, to make a momentous decision after such a brief acquaintance? Was it not the part of prudence, as well as of chivalry, to allow time for friendship to ripen into affection, if indeed it was possible that his love should be returned? The matter was of too vast importance for him to risk so soon a complete disillusionment. For even should he be living in a fool's paradise, he would, perhaps weakly, prefer to enjoy it for a while rather than by hasty action incur the risk of being driven forth at once into outer darkness. Soon a time would come when it

THEORIES

would be in every way fitting that he should speak his love and abide by the decision of those adored lips. Sometimes he would hope that supreme happiness might be his. Yet often again he feared that the treasure might already be in another's keeping, or that in any case it was presumptuous for him to attempt to win it. Humility is a sign of sincerity in love.

Dayton was, however, certain that, if doubt and anxiety continued to dog his footsteps, as they had done for the last twenty-four hours, he would be justified in risking all in order to secure, if possible, the right of defending Constance from misfortune.

After some conversation on the agreeable nature of the day's outing, Dayton endeavored to discover whether Constance was suffering from any anxiety. All the circumstances required that he use the greatest delicacy. He would try to speak as the interested friend, when he would have given all the world to be able to speak as the acknowledged lover.

They had finally sat down in one of the rooms engaged by the party. They were now alone, as everybody else had gone on deck to see the ship passing out of the harbor. The steady throb of the machinery began to shake the vessel. The water was heard as it swirled past outside. Through the windows the panorama of the now distant wharves and city passed before their eyes.

"You have lived a long time in Royaltown," Dayton said.

"Yes, almost all my life."

"The city seems to be healthy. It has a good situation."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Yes, it is a healthy place. None of our family have ever been seriously ill."

"You are yourself always quite well, Miss Lyman?"

"Oh, yes, quite well, Mr. Woodford."

"You are in good health at the present time?"

"Yes, I have never felt better. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, pardon me. The other day some friends just incidentally remarked that you seemed to them to be hardly so well as usual of late."

No sooner were the words spoken than Dayton would have given much to be able to recall them. They produced an astonishing effect. Constance turned white as death and then red, as if with the blush of shame. To Dayton's love-quickenened eyes her whole being seemed to shrink and shrivel up as in a fierce fire. At that dreadful moment he hesitated no longer, but rushed determinedly to the rescue with terms of love upon his lips.

"Oh! Constance, my beloved! May I not call you that? If there is misfortune, can I not in some way help you?"

What did he see in those eyes for an instant before they were averted?

"Constance, I love you. I must and will help you," he cried.

She appeared by a supreme effort to come to some resolve. Throwing herself upon her knees before Dayton, who was close to her, she began to speak rapidly, passionately.

"Oh, Dayton, you must not speak to me of your love. It is more than I can bear. For oh! I love

THEORIES

you, I love you; but I must never think of hearing words of love in return. All honor, all duty, all affection forbid me. I cannot, I must not explain what I am saying. If you love me, you will never ask. We can never be anything but friends. But oh! we shall be friends forever, shall we not? If you should grow to hate me, I should die. How can I keep from telling you I love you, I love you?"

Dayton endeavored to lift her up, but she resisted with all her strength. He knelt down and tried to fold her to his embrace, but she held herself back.

"Constance," he cried, "there is nothing that can keep us apart, if you really love me! That fact makes everything possible and permissible. Will you not allow me to help you?"

"Oh, Dayton, it is impossible, impossible! Do not make this terrible agony harder for me." She rose to her feet impetuously. "I must and will bear it alone."

"But," Dayton interposed, "no sacrifice can be too great for me to make, if I can be of the slightest assistance. Can you see no means whereby I might help you?"

"None, absolutely none. There is no way."

"But if there should come a time when I could help," persisted Dayton, "will you promise to inform me at once and permit me to assist you?"

"If there comes a time," she answered, "when you can help, I promise to go to you, no matter what may be the circumstance, and implore your aid. But, Dayton, I beg you to leave me now, and, when we meet again, it must be as friends, just as before. All that has been said must remain in oblivion. I

know that you will be considerate in this matter, as you are in everything."

"Constance, I cannot tell you how heart-breaking all this scene has been to me. Of course it is my duty to respect your wishes, though every impulse of my being urges me to some kind of action, however blind it may be. But still I have a hope which cannot be taken away, that sooner or later all will come right for us, and that I shall clasp you in my arms as my promised bride."

A look of unutterable love shone for a moment in the eyes of Constance, and then was extinguished in the blank mist of despair. Dayton turned and went slowly from the room.

Hardly knowing or caring what he did, he was making his way to the forward part of the ship, when he passed an open door. Inside he perceived four young men playing cards around a table, while sitting near and looking on at the game was William Ellson. A second glance showed Dayton that he knew all those who were present. He had met them in various ways since he had arrived in town. One was the son of the senior judge of the county, another was a young lawyer, brother and partner of a prominent king's counsel, a third was the son of the president of the Electric Transit Company, and the remaining person was the brother of Constance Lyman, a medical student at home for his vacation.

The son of the judge happened to glance up as Dayton was passing. He called to the American to come in and join the party, if he had nothing more interesting to do about the ship.

Dayton, making an effort to conceal as far as possible the traces of the emotions through which he had

THEORIES

just passed, entered, and, as he observed that the young men were ceasing to play, he said at once, "Go on with your game. Do not interrupt it on my account."

"There is no interruption, Mr. Woodford," returned the judge's son. "We have just finished, and we have thoroughly beaten the law and the profits. Haven't we, Lyman?"

Lyman murmured "Yes," in a nonchalant manner. Dayton, it may be remarked incidentally, did not have a high opinion of the brother of his beloved. In this he was not entirely alone. Charlie Stringer had been known to say once that George Lyman was "all right in his way, but he did not weigh much." Charlie, too, was a lenient judge of character.

"That's all very well, Morris," observed the member of the bar. "Our luck has been a little against us to-day. If Mr. Woodford will excuse us for a while, my partner and I will take a turn on the deck. Glassford here wants to show his serene countenance to the ladies. We'll be back shortly, for I think they will not wish to keep him long."

When the two young men had left, Morris asked if it was the desire of the company to have a game. But no one seemed to feel much inclination to play. Then, happening to glance out of the window, he called the attention of the others to what was going on across the water at the shore, which was plainly in sight.

"Yonder is the wharf of the old Reynolds quarry, gentlemen. You can see that there is quite a crowd."

Dayton looked, and was startled by his instant intuition that he was observing from another point of view the locality of his last night's adventure. The

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

scene was surprisingly animated. Vehicles of various kinds were to be noticed on the road, either going or coming. Many persons were gathered on the wharf. Several small boats were moving about the neighborhood. An air of excitement seemed to pervade the whole shore line.

Morris, perceiving that Dayton appeared to manifest an unusual interest in the matter, said to him, "I suppose you have read the story in this morning's *Earth and Mars*. It is curious that the *Polar Star* has not a word. Smith appears to have made a big scoop."

Dayton, putting a good deal of restraint upon himself, answered in a fairly even tone that he, unfortunately, had not had time even to glance at the newspapers before coming away.

"By the employment of the rarest journalistic art," said Morris, "Smith has succeeded in making a long and thrilling article. But the few facts reduced to their primitive, unorganized state may be put very briefly. A quarryman brought a story to town late last night that he had been walking home along the beach, when he saw ahead of him, on the old quarry wharf, what appeared to be a fight between two men. Suddenly one fell into the water, and the other pried loose a couple of planks and threw them in after him. This person then ran off and disappeared in the bushes. Soon afterward an automobile rushed down the road. Some one sprang out, looked about the place for a few minutes, then got back into the car, and went off again at full speed.

"The quarryman, not liking the look of things, had been in no hurry to go forward to the scene of action. When at last he did so, everything was as

THEORIES

usual, except in so far as the planks were concerned. These were to be seen floating a little distance away. You may imagine how the trained journalist's mind would develop this unvarnished tale into a nightmarish, nerve-racking chronicle of horrors. 'Mad Murder at Midnight !!!' so runs the title. The 'Quarryman's Story' is set down in its simplicity and then expanded. Theories are built upon it. Questions are propounded. Has there been a murder? A murder or something similar must have occurred, for the quarryman is a well-known character, who is on record as having told only two or three falsehoods in a lifetime, and with respect to these much provocation and many other extenuating circumstances might fairly be urged. If murder there has been, who has committed it, and where is the corpse? Naturally there should be something for a post-mortem. What connection has the motor-car and its driver with the case? Is he an accomplice of the murderer or a friend of the murderee? Did he arrive too late to save the victim or early enough to meet the assassin and spirit him away? And so Smith continues for three columns. 'I suppose half the crowd over there are trying to track the automobile to its lair, while the other half are endeavoring to find the planks. But the breeze has been off the land all night, and those bits of timber may be anywhere on the whole watery expanse by this time.'

Dayton's feelings may be imagined, when he found himself thus being dragged into the depths of a murder mystery. Would it be proper for him to keep secret what little he knew? Although he could throw no light upon the mystery itself, he could

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

set the authorities right as to the part the motor-car played in the drama. He decided to leave the matter for fuller consideration till after his return to the city in the evening, and in the meantime to reveal nothing of what he knew.

After a few comments from the rest of the party, Morris resumed:

"Smith was around to see me this morning before breakfast to inquire if I had heard anything about the affair. Probably he supposed that some action might be contemplated by the authorities, and that my governor might know something. I felt and recognized the journalistic probe at once. I said to him, 'See here, Smith, you're a smarter man than I think you are, if you can draw any information out of me, for I know absolutely nothing about the matter.' But Smith's power to scent news is remarkably keen. At breakfast I found that he was not far wrong in suspecting the governor. The old gentleman was out pretty late last night, and seems to have gained a certain amount of knowledge. Of course he did not speak in any direct way. Still, I inferred some things from what he said. But as soon as I remarked that Smith had been to see me, he shut up like a trap and talked about ore shipments from Cobalt. Now I have a theory about this assassination, if there really has been such. But I am not craving to give it general publicity. I think, however, that I have not much to fear from the present company. Lyman never could remember anything, and Ellson will forget all about it when once he begins to estimate the extent and value of the bumper snow-crop we shall have next winter. Mr. Woodford, being a fellow-citizen of Mr. Taft,

THEORIES

will be able to consider the whole question with judicial calmness and propriety."

"What is your precious theory?" asked Lyman, as he accepted a cigarette from Morris' abundant supply.

"Gentlemen, it is this. You know that there has been a good deal of trouble with burglars, both in this county and in the next one. The pater presided at one trial, as a result of which two worthy fellows, who had been caught red-handed and with the goods on them, were sent to Limestone City to be fed and clothed at the national expense. Now a very peculiar fact is that no burglary of any serious character has occurred at Royaltown. Consequently a possible inference is that some of the men live there, probably in an outwardly respectable way, and are taking no chances of being discovered, for detection would assuredly follow if they misbehaved in a small city like ours. The question then is, can one make a guess as to who these men are? It is an open secret that the police think they know them. But be it observed that our blue-coated friends have been keeping a close watch on the comings and goings of these people, and have not been able to secure what they call 'positive evidence' against them. The proper inference, therefore, seems to be that the burglars are not known, and that the real criminals may be you, I, the next person, or the captain of this ship. So we have to put down a little x for the unknown quantity and proceed."

"You are either a third-rate detective," remarked Lyman, "or a first-class humbug. But in any case you are interesting."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"We gratefully acknowledge the appreciative comments of the gallery. But let us hasten on. If the headquarters of the gang are here, the booty is probably brought to some lonely place outside of the town and divided. What is more natural than to infer that quarrels arise? Honor among thieves is not a fully accepted rule of action. If quarrels arise, these may lead to worse. We can thus suppose that the scene which the quarryman witnessed on the disused wharf had such an origin. Now for the objections. No one has yet been found missing, and no corpse has thus far put in its appearance. Possible answers are as follows: The slain burglar, though a member of the gang, may be resident in another town when he is not engaged at his business. The body may still be recovered, or it may have been taken out of the water shortly after the tragedy by the murderer or his friends and disposed of elsewhere. The presence of the motor-car shows how easily this might be done. The driver, no doubt, first carried the murderer to town. Afterwards when it was thought to be dangerous to leave the dead body so close to the shore, where any one might easily find it, the original two or some others might easily come and, securing it, remove it to some secret place on the lake shore."

"You certainly deserve a medal for your imagination," said the unappeased Lyman. "You ought to have some fresh air after putting yourself to such a severe strain. Let us go on deck and see what those two fellows who deserted us are doing."

Accordingly, they all left the room. Dayton, however, did not follow the others. He could not keep his feet from straying in the direction of the place

THEORIES

where the terrible scene with Constance had occurred. But in the intervals between graver thoughts he reflected half whimsically that he could now partially imagine the bewilderment of a prisoner on trial, when counsel for the prosecution and counsel for the defence sort over his acts and weave them into two tales of quite diverse character.

When he came to the door of the room, he found it open. There was nobody inside but Lotta, who immediately called to him to enter.

"Dayton, where have you been all this time?" she exclaimed. "I have been looking for you everywhere, and finally I gave up all expectation of seeing you."

"I am here, Lotta. What have you to say to me?"

"It is about Constance. I saw you walking with her just after we came on board. What has happened?"

The direct question was unexpected. Dayton could not entirely control himself. But even the youngest maid has quick perceptions in matters of the kind.

"You need not answer my silly question at all," she hurriedly exclaimed. "It was rude of me to speak in such a way. But I am very much worried about Constance. She has been sitting for an unknown length of time at the back of the ship with that Mr. Charters, and neither of them has once looked at or said a word to the other. They have just continued to gaze hard at the water, both of them. It is the strangest thing I ever saw."

Dayton was so much at a loss as to what he should do that he would have been glad to take counsel with

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

this young girl, whom he was sure he could trust, and who would possess a knowledge of the situation derived from intimate acquaintance such as no stranger could possibly obtain. He was confident that, if Lotta were given the information which the strength of love had wrested from Constance, she could easily explain the whole state of affairs. But he was absolutely bound by honor not to reveal what he had learned.

Just at the moment laughing voices were heard approaching, and almost at once several of the members of the party entered. At the head were Miss Sheldon and Charlie Stringer. As soon as Flava saw Dayton and Lotta, she exclaimed, "How mournful you look, little children! Were you naughty, and have you been sent down from the deck as a punishment?"

With the tacit understanding that the conversation would be resumed at a later time, each turned to the company and endeavored to enter into the merry spirit of the hour. Flava and Dayton began an animated discussion, while Lotta devoted herself to Charlie.

At last Flava asked Dayton to accompany her on deck, for they were now nearing port, and she wished to show him the points of interest. When they were comfortably seated, she said:

"You must know, Mr. Woodford, that I was born, and an effort made to bring me up properly, in the little village which you see with its scattered houses on the shore. That was before 'Sheldon Syrup' had been widely advertised and had become an article of daily necessity in every household. No one would at that time have accused my father of being a cap-

THEORIES

tain of industry. You will notice that little bay over there. That is what is called 'The Bend.' The water is very shallow, and many a time have I fallen therein. One unfortunate Sunday afternoon, when I was about six years old, has a distinct place in my memory. I had been carefully dressed by my mother in my newest and starchiest apparel. It was still too early to start for Sunday School, and so to pass the time I went down to the water. This was contrary to all injunction. On arriving there, I saw some of the boys and girls, who were always pointed out to me as the terrible examples, afloat upon a raft and having a gorgeous time. No difficulty was found in persuading the youthful mariners to take me aboard. It was an ecstatic moment, but like all such, was quite too short. We almost immediately ran against a stone, and I, being near the edge, went overboard. After a good deal of trouble I was got out, a much bedraggled figure. With the help of some of the little girls I reached home safely, sobbing as if my heart would break and exclaiming, with all the vanity for the time being washed out of me, 'My new dessy! My new dessy!'

"When I was a little older, I had another experience on the water that was much more perilous. My usual comrade at the time was a neighbor's boy. We were down at the wharf together one morning, and began playing on a raft which some painters had been using while at work on the hull of a ship. Finally, we unfastened the rope that held it to the shore, and amused ourselves by pushing it out a little. Then we continued our play upon it, without noticing that a strong wind had sprung up from the land and had begun to carry us out into the lake.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

At last we observed that the waves were growing large, and found to our dismay that we were already several hundred yards from land, without any means of getting back. Nobody happened to see us. We called as loudly as we could, but in vain. We continued to drift out rapidly. I commenced to cry and held to my comrade as closely as I could. He was as badly frightened as I was, but he caught hold of some strips of wood that were nailed across the middle of the raft, and said that he would cling to them till some one missed us and came to our rescue, and that I was to hold fast to him. I must say that I hugged that poor boy tighter than I have ever hugged anybody else in my life. Still the waves grew larger, and the faster we seemed to be going out. I stopped crying after a time, because I became really too frightened to utter anything beyond an occasional sob. Finally, after what seemed a century, a tug came after us and picked us up. The first person I saw was my father, who pulled me aboard, too thankful that my life was saved to think of scolding me. By all the laws of romance I should in later life have married that boy. But he has long since left this part of the country, and so it is scarcely probable that the story will have the traditional and proper ending."

"Do you fancy that there is any hope of finding a raft when we arrive?" asked Dayton.

"It is perfectly useless to try to repeat the adventure under modern conditions. In these days of equal aspiration of the sexes we should both hold on to the strips of wood and both get thoroughly drenched in the selfsame way. Besides, you can see that thunderstorm yonder. It or its brother may

THEORIES

possibly come in this direction. Moreover, my nautical sense already begins to give warning that we may expect a stormy time on the lake this evening, and, if it should happen that we were not rescued opportunely, the result might be deplorable."

"One has often occasion to regret," returned Dayton, "that history perversely refuses to repeat itself."

"But perhaps if history were willing to repeat itself, you might wish to run away from history."

"How heartlessly cruel you are, Miss Sheldon! You accuse me of base cowardice."

"You are not a coward, but a brave man. I know that you will always act as a brave man should and defend from misfortune those whom you hold dear."

Dayton was startled at the sudden change from light badinage to a tone of intense seriousness. He observed his companion looking fixedly across the deck, and, following her glance, he perceived that Constance and the person whom Lotta had called Mr. Charters were preparing to go below. He could not see Constance's face, but in her every movement he fancied he could trace an indescribable lassitude. Turning about, he glanced quickly at Flava.

But that volatile lady was chattering away, as if a serious thought had never entered her brain. Nevertheless, Dayton recognized that the words had been fully meant, and it was at this moment that he felt the first strange numbness produced by the terrible shock begin to pass slowly from him. Something within bade him not entirely despair of being able to rescue Constance from the mysterious dangers that surrounded her. He knew that Flava was Constance's most intimate friend.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Meanwhile, he listened to her Bædekerizing the village.

"The main street down to the lake," said Flava, "is known as Broadway. But let it not recall visions of a more famous thoroughfare. It derives its name from the Broad Road that begins here and runs to the upper lake. The other streets that are parallel to it are called Smith, Brown and Jones Avenues, from the names of prominent citizens. The cross-streets are Thomas, Richard and Henry, respectively. There is also a diagonal street, namely, Mary Ann Road. Are you not grateful for all this wealth of information?"

Dayton replied that the acquisition of this knowledge had been one of the fondest dreams of a lifetime.

"The really noteworthy thing, however, is the river," she continued. "You can see it flowing into the lake not far from the wharf where we land. For miles it is truly a camper's paradise."

The vessel had almost reached the landing-place, and everybody was preparing to disembark. Charlie Stringer appeared at the miraculously proper moment, and Flava, bowing graciously to Dayton, allowed herself to be escorted on shore by the faithful youth.

CHAPTER IV.

FLOOD.

AT the further end of the village the river made a great bend in its course before finally merging its identity in the waters of the lake. Here were situated large grounds used for picnics and other open-air celebrations, and not far off stood the inevitable and very welcome summer hotel and restaurant.

To this point the whole company wended its way by direct or indirect routes. Lotta and Dayton naturally found themselves together at the first opportunity. But in the interval an extraordinary reticence as to the subject of their previous conversation had sprung up between them. Yet, strange to say, instead of this making them feel more apart, it tended to draw them closer together. They seemed to understand each other better in some secret way. Though they talked about indifferent things, it was in that subtly cadenced tone which long-tried friends use in their intimate conversations.

Very quickly Dayton noticed that Constance and her companion had not come as far as the grounds, and must have stayed behind in the village. Later he learned that they had almost immediately secured a carriage and had driven back to the city. By inquiry he found that Mr. Charters was Mr. Richard Charters, assistant manager of the Lyman Manufacturing Company, which was under the control of Constance's father.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

The voyage had made everybody hungry, and soon the tables in the restaurant were surrounded by happy people with very noisy tongues. The particular company to which Dayton belonged gathered itself together after its dispersion while passing through the village, and taxed the resources of the management to supply all the luxuries which the latter professed to furnish upon demand. Though several things were found to be "just out," or "off," or "coming on the next boat," every one was able to appease a more or less ferocious appetite. Dayton, to his surprise, suddenly came to the realization of the fact that he was eating as heartily as the rest, for he was truly a healthy young man, and it is the nature of all healthy human beings to eat.

The afternoon was supposed to be one of unalloyed merriment, and Dayton wondered how it would be possible for him to keep up the pretence. Yet keep it up he did, and none but Lotta had reason to suspect that the outward semblance was widely different from the inward reality.

Morris succeeded in gaining possession of a motor-boat by begging, by borrowing, or possibly by other means. He said it belonged to a friend who was camping nearby, but he would not explain further than to remark that he had obtained it "by hook and by crook and by the exercise of the magic arts." As he admitted finally that the friend was at the time absent, it was deemed wise not to probe too far into the matter. Meanwhile, most of the company had scattered along the river and the adjacent lake-shore, to engage in the various amusements of boating or visiting friends in the campers' cottages. Morris, however, secured a small party to accom-

FLOOD

pany him for a run up the river. As Lotta was evidently the magnet of that young gentleman's affections, he was much delighted to have her of the company. The others who went were Miss Sheldon, Charlie Stringer, Dayton, and Morris' sister, who happened to be staying at the hotel for a week with some friends. William Ellson had gone off to call upon a certain Mr. Harry Brown, with whom he was acquainted.

After passing beyond that part of the river which was the haunt of the holiday-makers, they swept on through peaceful rural scenes, where cows stood in the water close to the banks, and looked at them with calm happiness or placid melancholy—one would be puzzled to decide which it might be. Through the open spaces in the fringe of trees on each side were to be observed enchanting vistas of fields and meadows drowned in a deluge of sunshine. Yet far away to the left the thunder was faintly muttering and the black shadow of the storm shrouded the horizon.

The broad stream was strangely quiet and lonely.

"It seems very peculiar," remarked Dayton, "never to meet a boat on this large river, which is evidently navigable. There is nothing but the cheerful chirp of our motor to break the stillness. Do the people hereabout never take advantage of their proximity to this magnificent stretch of water?"

"There are upon it no villages of any importance," explained Morris, "and the farmers do not think it worth while to provide means of transport for their goods by water. The river is frozen over and useless in winter, and that is the time when the rural inhabitant takes most of his heavy products to

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

market. Mr. Jack Frost, our oldest and most respected citizen, provides more convenient roads on the land. If our waters were open all the year round, I am certain that we should develop decidedly nautical tendencies."

"We are coming in sight of Big Island," said Morris, some little time after, "and, if nobody has any objection, we shall land there before turning back."

He skilfully brought his craft round to a suitable place for disembarking, and all went ashore.

The island had been almost entirely cleared of trees, and was now covered with long grass. In the centre was an abandoned log-house with a massive stone chimney.

"No one knows who built this place in the wilderness," said Morris. "It must have been erected, occupied, and vacated before there was any other settlement in the district."

"Some of the fellows at the bank," remarked Charlie, "say it is reported to be haunted. They have been up here several times, but they have always failed to find the ghost."

"*Haunted*, did you say, Mr. Stringer?" exclaimed Miss Morris. "How romantic! I adore ghosts. We *must* look inside."

They all peered through the vacant windows and doorway. There was a large fireplace choked with rubbish. Some fragments of the old flooring remained. Elsewhere decayed weeds and grasses covered the ground.

"How interesting!" said Miss Morris. "I believe a really melancholy ghost might like to live here."

FLOOD

"My opinion is that it is hardly a comfortable residence for a ghost of even the least luxurious habits," remarked Charlie.

"After all," said Flava, "there has been only one fully authenticated ghost in this part of the country, and she got married."

"How supremely interesting!" said Miss Morris.

"This ghost, who lived near a cemetery," continued Flava, "was in the habit of sleep-walking among the graves and also along a high board fence. One night, when a crabbed old bachelor farmer named McGee was riding home, she leaped from the fence to the horse's back. She then threw her arms about the rider's neck and would not be shaken off. Frightened out of all scepticism by the suddenness of the apparition, Mr. McGee arrived more dead than alive at a small hotel half a mile down the road, and called to some people who happened to be outside, 'Take this ghost off!' But the spectre proved to be both pretty and girlish, and afterwards won him from his bachelor ways. The Clearwater poet has immortalized the story in these lines:

"Prudent and practical John McGee,
Clear-headed, sensible man was he,
Whose wit was ne'er by his fancy crossed,
How was such to believe in a ghost?

"And so when his neighbor, Thompson Wright,
Came in one eve with a tale of fright,
That a spirit walked, there was no mistake,
In the graveyard old beside the lake,

"That Tony Lee had seen it last night,
Arrayed in a woman's garb of white,
Slow pacing about from stone to stone
In the full moon's ray that clearly shone.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"The answer he got was quick and plain:
'Sure Tony Lee had an addled brain.
He drank of the glass too deep last night,
And moonbeams played with his dazzled sight'—

And so on for forty stanzas."

"Have you many poets in this country?" asked Dayton.

"The woods and the fields and the banks are crowded with them," answered Morris. "You may have your choice from the rude mediæval rhymes of the bards of the mining camps to the more polished doggerel of the cultivated verse-makers in the capitals."

"And as a rule," remarked Flava, "they are a thrifty race. In the case of the Clearwater poet my father promised to buy ten copies, if a book of one hundred pages was produced. When the volume appeared, it had only ninety-six pages. But the poet explained that legally it had one hundred pages, because the covers were counted."

"I should like to see that poet in the flesh," said Dayton.

"I am sorry that he is not in the village at present. My father told me a few days ago that he had gone west on a harvesters' excursion."

The party now went back to the boat, and the return trip was begun. At some little distance above the picnic grounds Morris said he would cross over to the opposite side of the river. They could land there and thus be saved a walk round by the bridge. The chief object of interest was a waterfall on a small tributary that emptied into the river at this point. After disembarking, they followed a path up through the woods and came suddenly upon what Charlie

FLOOD

termed the "cataract." It was in truth quite a young Niagara, on the brink of which was a rock that separated the shallow water into two nearly equal streams. The straight fall was about ten feet, but there were miniature rapids below. Some little children were paddling about with naked feet, and enjoying themselves to their hearts' content. The sunshine, silting through the overarching trees above, filled the atmosphere with a subdued glow. The whole scene was peculiarly grateful to Dayton's distressed spirit. The sound of the falling water seemed to soothe him as if it had been a lullaby. He allowed himself to be left behind unobserved, when the others returned to the bank of the main river.

After a little time he began vaguely to notice that the water appeared to be increasing in volume. It was also growing more turbid. He remarked, half dreamily, that the banks of the stream were very high even above the fall, and he wondered in a careless way if in time of flood the water ever filled to the brim the space between. Looking down from where he was seated, he saw that all the children had wandered away, except one little girl of about six years of age who was resting on a large stone in mid-stream and dangling her feet in the current. He grew strangely uneasy and called to her. But she did not hear. The water was evidently now rising fast. Dayton became definitely alarmed, threw himself down the side of the slope, caught the child round the waist, and was hurrying up again, when a veritable wall of water, crowned with foam and bearing with it great trunks of trees, poured over the fall and all but seized them as it

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

crashed and roared through the narrow channel below. But by a desperate effort he caught the overhanging branch of a tree, and by its aid he swung himself and the little one to safety on the bank. There he fairly stumbled into the arms of Morris, who with Lotta had come back to find him, for it was now approaching the time of departure for the city.

Dayton was kept by Morris from falling. The little girl whom he had dropped from his arms leaped to her feet again, hardly conscious of what had happened. The water had already begun to subside.

Lotta had arrived with Morris just in time to see the flood's mad descent. She was overjoyed at Dayton's almost miraculous escape from death, and proud of his plucky rescue of the little girl.

"But what must have happened at the river!" she exclaimed in horror. "We shall go at once and give help, if we can."

She caught the little one's hand, and all four hastened down the woodland path to the bank of the Clearwater. There they found the river in wild commotion. A fierce current was sweeping down stream, but was fortunately lessening in violence. The picnic grounds in the distance were covered with people. Groups were rushing from the hotel and the neighboring cottages.

Morris, surveying the scene, said to the others, "It is possible that not so much damage has been done after all. The tributary flows in here at a wide part of the Clearwater, and there is a high bank opposite. The flood has thus been kept to the channel of the river, and yet has had some opportunity of spreading itself. I suppose the boat in

FLOOD

which Miss Ellson and I came across is out upon the lake by now or high and dry somewhere on the river bank. I am glad Jack Maitland has his motor-boat back. If I had brought it over here again just now, it would certainly have gone out of commission for keeps."

Then he looked at the little girl, who had been almost forgotten in the excitement.

"Well, little girl, are you sure that you were quite alone when the flood came. Had all the others gone away?"

"I guess they must have," she replied.

Lotta noticed, with some compunction, that the child's feet were bare and bleeding. She had dragged her remorselessly down the rough path.

"Did you have any shoes and stockings, my little dear?" she asked.

"Yes, but I guess they're lost with my hat and lunch-basket," was the wonderfully calm and undistressed reply.

"Oh, you poor lamb!" said Lotta. "What is your name?"

"Edith Malton."

"Do you live at Port Clearwater?"

"No, I live in Royaltown."

"You were with some people, were you not?"

"I was with some little girls who had big sisters with them. They all went off and left me. But I did not mind, because I wanted to wade about in the water. I did not know I might be drowned."

"She certainly is the coolest atom of humanity that I have come across for some time. Would you have cared, Edith, whether you were 'drowned' completely or not?"

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Don't tease the child, Mr. Morris. She is a thoroughly brave little girl. Edith, are you not grateful to this other gentleman for saving your life?"

"Yes, miss, I am grateful to him, and I shall tell mother all about it when I get home."

Dayton smiled. "It is not of any great importance, Edith. All we must think of now is how you are to reach home safely."

"Oh, I'll see to that," said Morris, who had a warm and generous heart in spite of an outward assumption of indifference to the finer emotions. "And we'll procure a new pair of stockings, a hat and a lunch-basket, if the town affords such startling luxuries."

"But," protested the others, "we must all help."

"No, my friends, if I cannot reach the utmost pole of heroic achievement like Mr. Woodford, you must allow me at least to follow as far as the lower latitudes. I see some of our party are coming across for us. Miss Ellson, you and Mr. Woodford will be able to go back with them for dinner, while Miss Edith and I go shopping. We shall probably find something good to eat as well."

After putting aside all the objections urged by Lotta and Dayton, he said to Edith, "Now, we shall have to use shanks' mares, if we desire to reach the village. Does your acquaintance with the various means of transportation extend to a knowledge of those excellent animals?"

"I think you mean legs," answered Edith.

"That is exactly what I do mean, O clever infant! And as yours do not seem to be in the best condition for rough roads, the number had better be

FLOOD

reduced to the two I possess, until we come to the sidewalk on the Great White Way."

Saying this, he picked up the child, and, seating her on his shoulder, struck out along the bank towards the village.

"I should never have imagined that there was such excellent stuff in that young fellow," exclaimed Dayton. "Henceforth I desire to be entered on his list of friends."

"It was silly of me to fancy that he wanted to make fun of the little girl. I shall ask his pardon as soon as I meet him again."

The friends in the boat were Flava Sheldon and Charlie Stringer. When they arrived within talking distance, Flava gave utterance to the great feeling of relief which she had experienced when she saw that everybody was safe.

"My heart was in my mouth," she said, "until I saw you come out on the bank, and then it slowly descended."

"Do you think anyone was drowned?" asked Dayton.

"There does not appear to be anybody missing so far. But I am told that a great deal of damage has been done all the way down the river. The booms have been broken, and huge quantities of logs are now adrift on the lake. It was just like a tidal wave at the picnic grounds, but luckily nobody was very near the river. Most of the people were having dinner before starting for home. Everybody is wondering what was the cause of the flood, and there are theories innumerable."

"Where is William?" asked Lotta, anxiously.

"Oh, he's quite safe. He made haste to tele-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

phone to your mother, telling her of the flood and of the safety of us all. He is now in charge answering the messages that are coming in from every place this side of China. Royaltown is nearly frantic about the fate of its absent citizens. Mr. Stringer told your brother that he thought he could find a boat to bring you across, and thus save you the necessity of going round by the bridge. I volunteered to come as assistant. We had really some difficulty in finding a boat. This one happened to be high and dry, and so escaped the fury of the flood. Do not you consider us very brave to venture on the river so soon after what has occurred?"

"You and Mr. Stringer are very brave, indeed, to come for us," said Dayton, warmly. "And I think it would be well if we were to hasten away from here, for it is possible that there is more trouble brewing."

"Mr. Ellson believes," replied Flava, "that there is no further danger. He thinks that in consequence of the heavy rain a little lake up in the hills has burst its barrage—note my use of the learned term,—and all the water has rushed down at once. It appears that he knows the place very well. The lake was hat-pinned at the lower side by a mass of rocks, tree-trunks and things, and he has always thought that this was not very firm. He says that the Indians have a story that such a flood happened once before."

Therefore, trusting that all would be well, they rowed rapidly back to the grounds. Dayton and Lotta soon found themselves the centre of a little crowd that bore them off in triumph to dinner. There the story of Dayton's heroism began gradu-

FLOOD

ally to come out in spite of the young man's efforts to keep Lotta away from the subject. In due time Morris came up from the village in company with the little girl, now fully clad and loaded at all points with the most diabolically indigestible sweetnesss that the ingenuity of confectioners can devise. At once the enthusiasm reached its climax. Strangers asked to be introduced to Dayton, and praised him for his bravery and presence of mind. Though protesting that it was a matter of no importance, and that any one who might have happened to be there at the time would have done the same thing, the young man found it well to submit goodnaturedly to the compliments and the handshaking.

"I feel like the President, or the Prince of Wales," he said to Lotta, "and it is largely your fault."

Meanwhile, the little girl, the innocent cause of Dayton's embarrassing popularity, found her former comrades again. By the timely assistance of these young people, with whom everything was quickly shared, she was saved from nightmare and kindred evils. Thus for the time being she passes off the stage of this history.

At the wharf Flava and Lotta lingered for a while before going on board the vessel, in order to say good-bye to Miss Morris.

"How I should like to be returning with you to Royaltown!" said that fair exclamation point. "But the wind is growing extremely violent, and I forget myself so utterly when I am seasick."

After she had gone away to speak to some other friends, the girls stood for a moment alone.

"I did not notice Dolly Stater and Marie Davis on the way over," remarked Flava, glancing up at

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

those who had already taken their places on deck. "They must have come by the late afternoon train."

"I fancy that I recognize the gentleman who is with Miss Stater," said Lotta.

"It is quite probable that you do, for he is employed at Green, Sward and Company's. He is strangely interesting, because he expresses himself in such a very peculiar manner. The other day I was in the shop, and found that there was a good assortment of lace silk hose in his department. I stopped to ask something about the price. He satisfied my curiosity, and then, to encourage me to buy, he held up at full length the singular of the article, exclaiming, 'Isn't that a nice *hoe*?' It was so quaint."

Lotta was in great fear that she should "disgrace herself," in spite of all her efforts at restraint.

"Do not tell me any more stories, Flava," she pleaded, "or I shall explode. Please take me where I can be all alone and out of everybody's hearing for a few minutes. I am capable of anything, if you don't."

"My dear, we shall seek a place of safety in the ship. I may have to loosen your clothing, if matters become critical. I thought I was telling such a harmless tale."

When Lotta, with a remarkably placid expression on her face, at last appeared upon deck, in company with Flava, the ship was already out on the broad bosom of the lake, and Port Clearwater lay behind in the distance. A stiff breeze was blowing and was rapidly working the surface of the water into lively commotion. Already an appearance of strain had begun to manifest itself upon many a

FLOOD

youthful countenance. Among those who were thus suffering was Dolly Stater. The gentleman from the hosiery department was evidently very much concerned. It happened that not far from them was seated the party whose doings we are chiefly narrating, and, when Lotta joined it with Flava, she could not resist the temptation of glancing once across at the interesting couple. Quite frequently words of their conversation drifted over, for neither Dolly nor her friend was accustomed to stifle the full force of their remarks. At last there came a long pause. The young man was plainly still more uneasy. Suddenly, in a tone of utter sympathy, he inquired, "Gettin' sick at the stom, Doll?"

A dead silence ensued. Everybody had heard. Then everything and everybody collapsed. As an earthquake to a skyscraper, so was this earnest question to the conventions of the occasion. Poor Lotta thought that she could not survive.

Instantly came Dolly's answer, "No, you goose, no, I'm not," and she "almost took his head off," as Flava remarked afterward.

Soon after she arose with much dignity, and, along with her crestfallen companion, disappeared below.

"I am sorry for that poor fellow," said Charlie Stringer. "Think what a reputation he has to support now."

From this time on events began to move rapidly. The deck was steadily and remorselessly cleared of its occupants. Even Charlie began to falter.

"I feel my time is coming," said he.

"If one did not rise so very high," said Morris, "and then sink so very low, it would be possible to

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

keep some control of inward goods and chattels."

"If the attention of this company is not instantly diverted, I shall not be responsible for the results," said Flava. "Let us sing something."

Thus, while the staunch steamer cut its way through the yeasty sea, the young voices gaily rendered the old favorite songs. As the night came on, the party had the deck pretty much to itself.

After a time the motion grew quieter, when the ship came within the shelter of a high headland. The young people fell to story-telling until the lights of Royaltown showed close at hand. Then, as the vessel swung in to the wharf, there was merry preparation for getting home.

Before Dayton was able to leave the ship, a tall, thin young man took possession of him in a most determined manner.

"I represent the *Earth and Mars*," he said. It was evidently Smith.

"You are, I believe, Mr. Dayton Woodford," he continued, "the hero of the day."

"My name is Woodford, but I am very poor stuff for a hero."

"The natural course of events and your own act have made you a hero, and, consequently, a hero you must be. You will find no means of escape. We wish to publish a full account of the big flood in to-morrow's paper, and we shall esteem it a great favor, if you will be so good as to help us by giving us a report of what happened."

The interview began. Dayton felt that it would be admitted even by the much experienced Smith that he took the "third degree" with credit.

At last the newspaper man said, "I have just one

FLOOD

more question to ask. I believe you have not told me the little girl's name."

"Edith Malton, if I remember correctly."

"Edith Malton," repeated Smith. "That is curious."

"Do you know anything about the little girl?"

"No, I do not know her at all," was the somewhat evasive reply.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAW.

IF any reader of romance has cared to peruse this matter-of-fact tale thus far, he will be overjoyed to learn that Dayton did not sleep well on the night following the day on which he was made aware of the tragic mystery surrounding Constance's life. Most persons would expect that a modern young man, endowed with splendid powers of digestion, would easily find sleep in spite of any affair of the heart in which he might happen to be the unfortunate or the rejected lover. But for the sake of those who believe that the romantic spirit is not dead, I am glad to be able to say that for some reason Dayton did not sleep well. After trying all the sides of the bed except the under side, and making a Gordian knot of himself and the bedclothes, he decided to rise, dress loosely in necessary garments, and walk about outside the house. But, feeling a little drowsy after donning his attire, he thought that it would be wiser to woo elusive Slumber by resting for a while in an easy chair. He put up the blinds and gazed out into the dreamy beauty of the night.

After perhaps three-quarters of an hour had passed, he fancied that he heard a slight noise in the room below. This surprised him, for he knew that his office was directly beneath. The noise was repeated. He ceased to be drowsy. It might be as well to go and see if anything was wrong. As a matter of fact,

THE LAW

he formed to himself no idea of what he might expect to find. Indeed, he was in a somewhat adventurous mood, and hoped for something unusual. Moreover, he thought it might make whatever was to happen or not to happen more interesting, if he approached with cautious steps. An old-time detective story occurred to his mind. He well remembered how he had come to read it and kindred masterpieces through the interchange of these highly entertaining tales among the boys in his class at school.

It should be mentioned that off the office opened a little room which had no window in the outside wall, but obtained all its light from the office itself. It had evidently been intended as a place for the reception of anything that was of more than usual value. Dayton kept many of his papers there and such small amounts of money as might accumulate before being deposited in the bank. He believed he had a couple of hundred dollars there now in bills of low denominations. In fact, he had more than once thought of installing a small safe, but had not yet done so.

When he entered the office, he certainly did see something unusual. The door of the little room was slightly ajar, and a dim light cast its rays from within. Dayton stepped quickly up to the door, pulled it wide open, and faced—the muzzle of a revolver.

Here was in actual fact a situation which Dayton had sometimes heard discussed as a theory, especially when the robbery of a western express happened to be reported in the newspapers. What would and should a man do under like circumstances? Dayton had always held that personally he would be

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

very submissive, being quite confident that he would be for the time completely dominated by the instinct of self-preservation. But, strange to say, the controlling impulse proved to be one of resistance. There must surely have been a long line of mediæval knights errants in the unrecorded part of his genealogical tree, men whose strength and passion mocked at death. He was conscious of a wild lust for conflict that shone in his eyes. At once the curtain of the ages was rent apart, and the twentieth century became the twelfth.

What happened next was equally astonishing. The revolver was dropped, and the partly masked man behind it spoke.

"Well, boss, it ain't no use. The old thing ain't loaded, and you're a husky chap to tackle with the fists. I give up."

Dayton was so taken by surprise that he could not for the moment frame words to reply.

"What is your name?" he asked, at last.

"That is not such an easy question to answer. I have had several names, chiefly aliases, as they generally call them. But the name I go by here is Malton, Dave Malton."

"Any relation to Edith Malton?" asked Dayton, startled.

"Well, I guess I'm the child's dad. She came home just before I left for work, and said that a young gentleman had saved her life in a flood down at the Clearwater, and that another one, the old judge's son, had bought her some things instead of what she had lost."

"Indeed, Mr. Malton, this is very strange. I was

THE LAW

one of those present, and I was able to join with the others in helping the little girl."

"Were you the one who saved her life? She said she did not know who this person was."

"Oh, I only ran down to the bank and pulled her up in time to escape a sudden rush of water down a small tributary of the river."

Malton tore off his mask.

"I'd be a little bit worse than most of the gang," he said, "if I did not appreciate your kindness to the little one."

"Oh, that is of no account. If you will come out here to the office and take one of these chairs, we shall be able to talk at greater ease."

"I don't mind if I do. This is not the usual end to a night's work, but it's all in the business."

"Will you have a cigar? I do not smoke myself, but I keep a supply for the benefit of my friends."

"You certainly do guess a fellow's wants. But by the by, I have a little of your cash here that you might like to see again. I didn't count it, but it's a fair-sized wad." Malton threw a thick roll on the table.

"Thank you, Mr. Malton. Are you in need of any money at present?"

"To tell the truth, I'm a little hard up. The wife has not been very well this summer, and there hasn't been much money coming in of late."

"Would you care to take some of this, either as a loan or otherwise?"

"Well, now that you mention it, I wouldn't mind negotiating a little loan."

"Here, you may have half the amount of this.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Pay me when you can. Write your name and address on that card. Now I should like very much to hear how you came to enter this unconventional business which you follow. I am an amateur student of human nature and life. I am not sleepy, and you are accustomed to late hours."

"You are asking me for a long story, and I don't know that I can tell it very well, so as to suit you. But if you'll put the questions, and let me give my evidence, getting me to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I think, maybe, I'll go through with it all right."

"To begin, Mr. Malton, were you born in this country?"

"Yes, I'm a Canuck, born and raised in the province, up west a piece."

"Tell me something about your family."

"My father was the laziest man that ever trod on shoe-leather. My mother worked hard, day in and day out, to keep a bite of something to eat in the house. She was a good woman, too, and read her Bible. I have often heard her spelling out the hard words to herself. She used to talk to my oldest brother and me, but it wasn't no use. There was another brother who was different, he probably took after her. We called him the 'parson.' He tried to live by working, but his name was against him. At last he joined a contingent of soldiers, and went to Africa when they were fighting Kruger and the Boers. He stayed out there when his time with the army was up, and the war was over. The last I heard of him he was doing well, was quite a big man, and thought of running for Parliament. I had a sister, too, but I'm a white woolly saint beside

THE LAW

what she was. She was mighty good-looking, but her nature would have suited old Beelzebub himself. If the talkers in the pulpits are right, and there's a warm place preparing in the next world, and my opinion is that there should be, she must have a specially white-heated corner by herself. It would have made the hair rise on a bald-headed statue to see how sweet she was, when she was sending a fellow to the inhuman bow-wows."

"You certainly express your meaning vividly, Mr. Malton. How about your own wife and children?"

"They are all right. Gav's a bright boy. Edith is a nice little thing. But Grace, she's the oldest, is the pick of the bunch. She's the finest natured girl in the country. The men in our family, when they did get married, always married good women, and, as I figure it, this has at last worked all the badness out of the breed. I'm the last of the criminal crowd there will be, and as a matter of fact I have never been greatly taken with the business myself. But once a criminal always a criminal, you know. There's everything to keep a man going on in the way he starts out."

"How did you come to take up burglary as a business?"

"It was quite natural and easy. My brother, who was a good deal older than I was, had already got in with a gang. They used to operate in the Western States. Every so often my brother would come home, and tell me what he was doing. I learned the tricks of the trade from him. One day he went away and never came back. Something or other must have happened to him. By this time

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

I was old enough to strike out in life for myself. I had got caught once or twice breaking into stores and collecting cigars and other souvenirs. I had been let off by the magistrates with a warning. So the place was becoming rather hot for me. I went tramping for a while for the benefit of my health. In the end I worked in with a gang of professional explorers of safes. If the North Pole had been a safety deposit vault, it would have found us there, sure. But I never liked the rest of the gang, and they never liked me. When at last they were all caught, except yours truly, they were ready to think that I had given them away to the police. After this I decided to abandon night work and earn my living by daylight. It was then that I got married. For quite a while I continued in the path of virtue, till hard times came and I lost my job. I gradually drifted into the old line of business again by various stages, that I need not tell you about. Again there was a grand round-up, but I was caught this time. Still, through an accident, a miscarriage of justice, or the effect of a cross-eyed lawyer on the jury, I got off with a fairly light sentence. When I was let out, I said to myself, 'Dave, this is a warning. It's time for you to reflect that night work may have its charms, but it's liable to interfere with your duty to your family.' So I returned home, where the missis was very glad to see me. She had thought that I was dead and gone for sure. We moved to Royaltown, and I settled down once more. But when the yellow streak is in a man, it's bound to show itself. I could not keep entirely straight. I have been of late the spiritual adviser of an amateur gang that have their shack down in a quiet place on

THE LAW

the lake-shore. I have provided the booze for them at moderate rates, and given them instruction in the science of the profession as well. But there ain't a genius in the bunch. They'll all be in jail in three months. Now, Mr. Woodford, I have told you these facts, because you asked me to, and I'm thankful to you for saving the little girl's life and treating me like a gentleman to-night. But if, after all, you're going to hand me over to the police, I'll shut up."

"You should naturally conclude," answered Dayton, "that I intend to allow you to stay out of jail, when I am lending you money. Otherwise I could hardly expect repayment. But I should like you to go on with the story of your life. It is more interesting than fiction. Indeed, it has a very exhilarating air of reality about it. Have you been engaged in burglary on your own account lately?"

"I did not intend to say much about that, but since you ask me, I have pulled off one or two neat little jobs."

"In Royaltown?"

"No, up the line. I've been rather afraid to touch the places in town. I wouldn't have come here to-night, if I hadn't heard from a man at the docks that you had gone for a week's camping at the Clearwater."

"Did not somebody tell you that I had come back?"

"No, they said you weren't with the crowd that got off the boat. I guess you must have stayed behind a little while."

Dayton felt that he owed something to Smith.

"If you ever go back to your old business, you

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

must organize a better news service," he remarked to the burglar. "Have the police never suspected you?" he next asked.

"The police!" exclaimed the other scornfully. "Why, I am friends with nearly every man on the force. They have not the least suspicion that Dave Malton is anything but what he looks."

"Has nobody, then, suspected you?"

"Nobody except, maybe, a thin gent by the name of Smith, who writes the dope for the *Earth and Mars*. He's a sly dog, but I can't guess how he got on to my scent."

"How do you know that Mr. Smith had some suspicion of you?"

"I can't say that I am sure of what idea Smith had in his head. He may have meant something when he asked me questions, and then, again, he may not. It was this way. I was standing around the market one morning. Smith stepped up to me and asked, 'Is there anything doing? I want a few interesting notes for the paper.' 'I don't know,' said I, 'whether it's interesting news enough for your paper, but times are hard, and there's nothing much doing in my line of work.' 'Oh, your work is opening, Jimmy,' said he. That was a startler. I took a close look at him, but could not read him. I said then, 'Young fellow, you're a little mistaken about the first part of my name, and maybe you're wrong in your mind about the second part, too. My name is Dave Malton, and I'm a hod-carrier when I'm professionally employed.' 'Oh, that's all right, Dave,' he said. 'Yours is a lifting business.' That staggered me, and before I recovered my equal balance, he had said 'good day,' and gone on. Those

THE LAW

were curious questions, and there was a curious way about the fellow when he spoke, as if he wanted to see how I would take them."

Dayton was intensely amused. Smith's whimsical ingenuity in playing with the uneasy mind of the burglar shed new light on the character of the energetic scribe.

"There is a good deal of talk in town about a mysterious murder," the young man said suddenly. "Your mention of Smith reminds me of it, because he had a long article in his paper regarding the affair. Did your gang of amateurs, so far as you know, have anything to do with it?"

"No, Mr. Woodford, so far as I know none of them had anything to do with whatever took place on the quarry wharf that night."

"Mr. Malton, you have given me an entertaining account of yourself. I have really begun to have an interest in the welfare of you and your family. I should like you to take a long vacation from your cherished profession and try some other means of making a living. I suppose you can get some honest work to do?"

"Yes, I can easily at this time of the year."

"Very well, see what you can get. When you chance to be out of work, come to me and I shall find you something to do about the place, either in the garden or in the stables. But do not come if you can obtain anything fairly remunerative, because I shall not pay you enough for what little I can find for you to make it worth your while to stay continuously with me. I should like to call at your house and make the acquaintance of your family."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"The missis will be delighted to see you, if you are willing to come. She'll be glad to be able to thank you for saving the little one."

"It is now only an hour or so till daylight," said Dayton, "and I suppose you will wish to go home. I shall show you the way out, if it is really necessary to do so. You may leave here whatever equipment you have. I should like to keep it to remind me of this interesting meeting."

After Malton had gone, Dayton returned to his room, but naturally found sleep further away than ever. He determined to make trial of the bed no more, and to wait patiently where he was for the appearance of day. After having an early breakfast, he would get through as soon as possible with his morning's work. Then he would report to the police regarding what he knew of the famous mystery. The affair with Malton would, of course, not be mentioned.

It was some time after eleven o'clock, when in front of the civic buildings he came upon the chief of police himself.

"This meeting is very opportune," said Dayton, going up to the officer. "I should like to have a few minutes' private conversation with you. My name is Woodford."

"Of course, I know who you are. I was well acquainted with your aunt. We disagreed on some points, but were good friends none the less. Just come with me to my office upstairs. We'll be quite alone there."

As they entered the official headquarters, Dayton observed that it was the first time that business had brought him to the place.

THE LAW

"Your remark reminds me of a story that is told about the police magistrate in the provincial capital. Have you ever met him?"

"No," replied Dayton, "I have not."

"The first time you are in his town, you should make a point of meeting him. There are several ways of doing it. Perhaps the easiest and quickest is to get drunk, break a window, or pull down a British flag."

The chief enjoyed his own joke immensely. He evidently did not allow himself to be depressed by the melancholy experiences of life.

"The story they tell about him is this," continued the officer. "A certain professor of theology, who was well acquainted with him, happened to drop in just as the magistrate was about to leave the courtroom after a good morning's work. The professor made nearly the same remark as you did a moment ago—'Colonel, this is the first time that I have been in your special domain.' 'You are not the only man,' instantly replied the magistrate, 'who has tried to make me believe that.' " Again the chief laughed heartily. "But now we should get down to business. You have some matter about which you wish to speak to me?"

"Yes; it concerns that murder mystery. I happen to have been an eye-witness of it at some distance, like the quarryman."

Then Dayton briefly told him what he had seen and what his own action had been.

"I am glad you have told me this," said the chief. "It confirms my own belief that there was real foundation for the story. On the other hand, the *Polar Star* man, Stephens, roasts Smith and his

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

paper pretty thoroughly in this morning's issue for such a wild fabrication. He takes the view that no murder occurred, and, consequently, that there is no mystery. Now Smith has a better knowledge than any other man as to what is going on in this town, and I am sure that he did not publish his article without knowing more than the quarryman told him. But he may be in the unpleasant position of having enough acquaintance with the circumstances to be confident that he is right, and yet not have sufficient definite information to prove his case.

"You may be interested to learn, Mr. Woodford, that there has been an attempt at burglary in a bank in the suburban district. Two of the young fellows who were sleeping above the bank in question, came over early this morning to report the matter to me. One of them is named Stringer and the other Russell. You possibly may know them. The account they gave was something like this. The bank regulations require them to sleep upstairs, and have a general regard for the safety of the funds below. About two-thirty this morning they were awakened by a noise. Stringer seized his revolver, went to the head of the stairs, and looked down. He thought he saw a couple of suspicious shadows moving across the floor towards the vault. Not being entirely certain, however, and feeling that in any case he ought to be polite, he called down, 'Gentlemen, I'm going to shoot.' 'Hi, there, sonny!' came back from below, and instantly a bullet whistled past his head. He ducked and, while he was wondering what on earth he ought to do next, he heard one of those below say to the other, 'No use, Pete! We'll get out of this.' The intruders left, probably by the road by which

they had entered, namely, through a rear window. The young fellows were very hilarious in telling their story. But, of course, it has its serious side.

"There is one man in this town," continued the chief, after a reflective pause, "whom I suspect of doing something in addition to saying his prayers and going to sleep like an ordinary citizen. Apparently he is living quietly and honestly, but he is not visibly performing any great amount of work. He is on good terms with the members of the force, in fact, he seems to know every one of them well. Whenever he meets me, he wants to talk. He is not content with merely passing the time of day, but he has always some remark to make that shows he is interested in our doings. Now that I have mentioned this, have you any idea whom I mean?"

Dayton was a little taken aback, but he answered straightforwardly, "I fancy that I have."

"What is your opinion?"

"The same as yours."

"You are comparatively speaking still a stranger here, and your independent opinion ought to be worth much."

Dayton began to wonder if his philanthropic efforts were about to come to an abrupt conclusion through the jailing of the proposed object of them.

"Will you have him arrested?"

"No, I should say not! We are in the same position as Smith. We know more than we are able to prove. If the man is careful enough, he may never be arrested."

Just then was heard a knock on the door. The chief called in stentorian tones, "Come in." The door opened, and Dayton recognized the police magis-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

trate of the city in the person who was standing outside.

"I see that you are busy, chief. I'll drop in again."

"No, I fancy that we have about finished our business. Come in and I'll make you acquainted with Mr. Woodford."

The magistrate, who, to judge from his appearance, viewed life under the same jovial aspect as the chief, entered, and, being introduced, was found to wear the appropriate name of Days.

"I think," said the chief, "you will be glad to meet Mr. Woodford, who is Mrs. Phillips' nephew, as you no doubt know. He comes from across the line, from a village there, I believe they call it New York."

After Dayton's antecedents had been thus carefully set forth and the civilities usual on such occasions had been concluded, the chief brought out the cigars. Dayton, being a non-smoker, did not indulge, but the others proceeded to light up.

"How did the case go?" asked the chief.

"Adjourned till Saturday," said the magistrate.

"Adjourned again! Kindly explain the *cause célèbre* to Mr. Woodford. You must have got the general drift of it by this time."

"It is a charge of slander complicated by an action for assault," said Mr. Days. "Mrs. Ryan and Mrs. Hogan live next door to each other. Mrs. Ryan is the complainant. She charges Mrs. Hogan with using offensive language towards her and with making various signs and gestures indicative of contempt. So far all is simple. But Mrs. Ryan has a friend, Mrs. Phelan, and Mrs. Phelan met Mrs.

THE LAW

Hogan in the kitchen of Mrs. Duggan, who lives next door to Mrs. Hogan. It should be mentioned that Mrs. Duggan is a daughter of Mrs. Phelan. On this occasion Mrs. Phelan and Mrs. Hogan got into a warm discussion over the original cause of trouble, and allowed logical arguments to be followed by those that were strictly physical. Witnesses speak of a great display of energy, much pulling of hair and other details. At last the ladies were separated by a couple of men. As a result further legal action has been taken."

Being quite overcome, Dayton could only express his opinion that the case was a difficult one.

"What are you going to do with it?" asked the chief.

"It is possible that I shall have to refer it to the Privy Council for a decision," replied the magistrate.

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGE.

Gently as falls a rose-petal or a snow-star, descended from heaven one of the ministering angels. He was called in the Divine language "The Merry One," for always the soft celestial laughter was near his lips. By the All-Father he was beloved with the intensity of omnipotent love. His messages of duty were countless, for he performed with ease many tasks that were difficult for his graver brethren.

When he touched the earth, he sighed. But quickly he smiled again. "Oh, you stupid old earth," he said, "wicked because you are stupid, and stupid because you are wicked. I could sigh forever when I visit you. But what is an angel's sigh? It is but a passing wave upon the infinite sea of our happiness, something that is of the same nature as our happiness itself. For what can it be else but a movement of our undestroyable happiness? But when an angel smiles, he does that which both in outward show and in inward character is in most conformity with his being. Therefore am I glad to be called The Merry One. I strive to make mortals smile in the midst of their woes, and I strive to make them smile in the midst of their sins, and pæans of joy I bid them raise in the midst of their right-doing. Many times have I known that this availeth much."

CHANGE

He took his way along the streets. Ned Bryan, standing at the door of his saloon, felt something fall like sunshine on his dark heart. A smile came to his surly face. "Tell Slippery Mike," he said, "to shut the bar up, and, if any of the crowd come round, he's to say to them that we are obeying the law, and there's nothing wet a-flowing till legal hours to-morrow. I'm feeling good and agreeable. Perhaps I'm to be converted. Stranger things have happened, Joe."

The angel passed on. Nothing was too insignificant to feel the influence of that bright presence. A boy, tormenting a dog, suddenly stopped his torture and said, "You are a poor, gentle brute after all. I didn't mean to hurt you very badly. Poor old Jack!" The frightened look of suffering passed from the dog's eyes, and he began to lick the boy's hand.

Radiant, though unseen, the angel pursued his way. Suddenly he paused, as if waiting. Almost immediately the figure of Dave Malton swung round the corner. That worthy had rather a bored look on his countenance.

"I'm blessed"—the word Dave actually used meant the opposite of this—"if I know what to do this evening. I'm under a contract with that Yankee to keep away from the gang, and I've done so religiously for a week or better. I never enjoyed boozing. I'll not try that. What else is a man to do in a town like this?"

Thus the ex-criminal communed with himself. The angel stepped up beside him.

"There's nothing left but the evangelistic meeting those young fellows are holding over in the

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

church. The regular preacher's away, but the devil never takes a holiday, though mortal man must. The affair is advertised as strictly limited to half an hour. I suppose I could stand the blessed"—same explanation as before—"talk for as long as that."

Malton resolutely turned his steps in the direction of the church. The angel kept close beside him. If the man could have seen who was his companion, he would have been utterly amazed. He believed that he was alone, and that nought in the universe was cognizant of his thoughts.

On arriving at the church, they went in. There were a small number of people present. Malton, looking round, saw his friend, the American, seated not far away. But both Dayton and he were surprised to recognize as one of the three young men sitting in front who were going to conduct the meeting, no less a person than Morris himself. The angel, leaving Malton, passed over to Morris and stood beside him. His presence could have been detected, if the mortal audience had been aware, by the sudden lighting up of the young man's face with a smile of energy and hope.

Almost immediately the service began. There were a couple of verses of a hymn, a very brief prayer, and then Morris spoke. Dayton, who had had no conception of what lay in Morris' soul and was unaware of the presence beside the young man, was amazed at the compelling force of his words, brightened as they were by flashes of the liveliest wit. The old sinner, Malton, who had come, as he thought, merely to pass the time and as a protest against the dullness of his present existence, was much impressed by the new and clear presentation

CHANGE

of the claims of a better life. He wondered if it were possible that the speaker might have a message for him in his hoary iniquity. Morris did not talk long. Then followed a few minutes of intermission. The young men and others went about and engaged in conversation with those present. Religious matters were discussed hardly at all. The aim seemed to be rather to make every one welcome. Malton now noticed for the first time that his daughter Grace was at the meeting. She had evidently come in late and had taken a seat at the back. Morris spoke with her a moment and then went over to where her father was.

"I am glad to see you here, Mr. Malton," he said. "We have never met before, but Miss Malton pointed you out to me just now."

"Yes, I dropped in for once. But I like your style of speaking. In fact I'm rather taken with the whole thing."

"I am very glad. But I do not deserve any praise. I am new to the work. Still I am trying to do my best."

"You mean to say that you have not been doing this kind of thing very long?"

"No, it is quite recently that I decided to take it up. It is only within the last few months that I have thought seriously of church work at all."

"If you think the advice of an outsider like myself is of any use, I would advise you to keep to it, for I must say, if when I was young some person had talked the way you did to-night, it might have made a difference in my life."

"I am delighted that you approve of my doing this work. If what I have said might have influenced

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

you in your youth, can it not influence you now as well?"

The angel stood by and made a third member of the group.

"To tell the truth it does. Besides, there has been a lot to upset me of late. I've done one or two things of a kind I did not expect ever to do. The force of circumstances got against me. If you'll take in an eleventh-hour man, it may save me from worse."

"Of course, Mr. Malton. The invitation holds good to the last moment of life."

"Yes, I have been told that often enough. But I'll hear what you have to say when you begin again, and perhaps I'll talk to you when the meeting's over."

Morris felt a sense of responsibility new to him when he began speaking again. He tried to imagine the case of the man before him and to say what he thought would influence his decision. Words and images seemed to come to him of their own accord. He was unconscious of the aid of the radiant being beside him. But now both had to wait in silence, mortal and immortal alike. They felt the Supreme Presence near, and they knew that the soul must of itself decide whether it would yield and be forever blest. Would it after all turn away, and, thus withdrawing, set the seal upon its fate?

At the close of the meeting Malton remained behind, and, when Morris went over and spoke to him, he said:

"I've decided to go on the job with the eleventh-hour shift. You've made out a good case, Mr. Morris. I've still a little time left. I don't know

CHANGE

whether you want to hear much about my past life, but the story of some of it might not be edifying."

"No, Mr. Malton, that is all past and forgiven. Think only of what is to come."

His daughter Grace came up just then with shining eyes. Her habitually sad and wistful expression was completely transformed. She and her father bade a warm good-bye to Morris and went out.

"Let us take the road round by the lake," said Grace, "and see the sunset while we are going home. I have often watched it, wondering if this time would ever come."

They followed a winding street for some distance, and then ascended a low hill, the top of which had been laid out as a small park. They leaned against a railing and looked out over the expanse of waters ablaze with the splendor of the setting sun. The mighty orb seemed to slip from the glowing sky into the depth of the wave as a great jewel into its case of burnished gold.

The thoughts of the man as he gazed upon the scene must have been a strange medley. Nevertheless, a new spirit brooded upon the face of chaos, and the miracle of creation was being enacted once again in the human soul.

But the thoughts of the girl were simple, straightforward, happy. With the mystic's faith, she explained the unusual as the supernatural and, consequently, to be accepted without further question. The sudden change in her father she regarded as the direct answer to her fervent prayers. Although she had never understood the real meaning of what was

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

mysterious in his life, she had been constantly made aware that he was not a good man. Therefore, she had prayed for him unceasingly for long years. Now the earthly glories on which her eye was gazing seemed to foreshadow those of heaven. She felt an angelic presence beside her as in the apocalyptic dream.

The angel led where a vast height
Uprose. They looked abroad:
There, like a bride all rich bedight,
Came out of heaven from God
A vision wondrous bright and great.

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And through there flowed a river clear,
The Water 'twas of Life;
Like crystal did its wave appear
That from the Throne of Life
Came forth where God was and the Lamb;
And there the Tree of Life
Grew on each side, with leaves of balm
For healing, and the strife,
The curse was o'er. Around the Throne
Came all the Sons of Life,
And in the forehead of His own
Was named the Lamb of Life.

At last, his message completed, the angel passed up as a beam of radiance in his course outward beyond the farthest star.

CHAPTER VII.

GRACE.

IN the early afternoon a few days later Dayton met Morris on the street and at once said to him that he had been very much pleased with the address in the church.

"I suppose you were surprised to see me acting in such a capacity," answered Morris. "Will you come round to the house for a little while? I have a cool place there that will be more agreeable than these pavements blazing with heat."

The judge's house was set back some distance from the street, and was surrounded by large grounds planted with numerous trees. Young Morris showed his visitor to a deeply-shaded spot where the cool breeze from the lake made itself felt.

"You may have your choice of a hammock or a chair," he said.

Dayton took the chair, and Morris comfortably disposed himself in the hammock.

"Now, Mr. Woodford, as I remarked to you just now on the street, you were no doubt very much surprised at seeing me engaged in work of such a kind. Some of my friends have even been so complimentary as to suggest that they would have expected it of any other person rather than of me. Such is the high opinion that one's acquaintances sometimes have of one's honorable self. But the

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

matter has been of long-standing consideration with me. I shall be entering in the autumn upon my final year at 'Varsity, and therefore it is fully time to come to some decision as to what is to be done with the major part of my earthly existence. I have never been attracted toward the apparently tricky science of theology. It appeared to me at one time as if most theologians were constantly endeavoring to impale those with whom they held discussion upon one of the horns of some fanciful dilemma, instead of making an effort to investigate the arguments of the opposing side and discover what was their validity or the reverse. I have had occasion to laugh at many weird logical structures devised by clerical disputants. Moreover, it is not conducive to respect for the Christian ministry to see the theologs in the making. I believe I could endure an occasional Judas, for on high authority we must expect to find such now and again. The ancient proportion was one in twelve. But it is harder to put up with simple frauds. What a future is awaiting certain congregations, unless some timely accident intervenes! Now, all this has a tremendously dampening effect. You begin to wonder if Christianity is slowly passing away in order to make room for something better, as paganism yielded before Christianity itself. Then you go out into the world. You learn of men like Bishop Bompas, a saint of the olden time living in our own day, who spent so many years laboring with the far northern Eskimos that he became almost an Eskimo himself. He certainly had all the fire of the apostles amid the eternal snows. You learn also of a host of others scarcely less self-denying. You realize the immense amount of labor that has to be done

in order to make anything worthy out of poor humanity. You begin to grow enthusiastic. You become careless of creeds and conventions. It does not trouble you very much whether this or that person has his theological hat on straight. Thus you pass from cynicism to action."

Dayton admired much the manly young fellow. He could hardly imagine that this was the same person whom he had heard so recently discoursing on board the "Laconic." "So much for my power of judging human character," he thought.

The conversation then fell upon Dave Malton.

"He has had a rather shady reputation," said Morris, "though there has never been anything definite against him. His wife and children, on the other hand, have always been considered to be highly respectable. I believe the family are in very poor circumstances, because Dave has never done much work. But I think the change in him is genuine, and I expect a great outward transformation in his habits. I have had one or two talks with him during the week, and he seems to look at matters in their proper light. Whatever his life may have been, I believe he has always had a certain element of good in him."

The conversation then drifted on to Morris' conception of his future sphere of labor. He felt sufficiently humble as to his capabilities. "I do not of course know yet where I shall be able to do my best work," said he, "but by the time I am through college the way will no doubt be clear before me. A young man, in my opinion, should consider himself as a soldier ready to obey orders. I know that this is the hardest thing for some of us to learn."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"How does your father regard your choice of a career?"

"The judge, you know, is not by any manner of means a religious man. It must be confessed that there is a story told in the town that the only time he was ever known to read his Bible was when President Kruger used to send out despatches containing references to passages of Scripture. My father had a hard life when he was young. He came through the heaviest days of pioneering, and his virtues are rough and ready but genuine. Yet, to tell the truth, I wondered what he would say when I should tell him that I intended to enter the ministry. You know it is quite recently that I made my final decision. In fact, it is since our eventful trip to Port Clearwater.

"One evening I went to him. He was in the library, and had a volume of provincial statutes before him.

"'Father,' I said, 'I have pretty well decided what I should prefer to make my calling in life, and, if you approve, I shall have the important matter fully settled.'

"'Well, young man, what is it to be? Law, medicine, tooth carpentry, drugs, or veterinary surgery? I respect them all except the artistic work with the teeth. Driller did a fearful job the last time I let him tamper with my jaw.'

"'I wish to become a minister.'

"'What kind? Minister of labor, restfulness, or secretary of state? I'll speak to the premier about it.'

"'No; a minister of religion.'

“ ‘Well, I’ll be ——! Excuse me, Roy; I didn’t know your inclinations ran in that direction.’ ”

“ ‘I have been thinking over the matter for some time, and I have come to the conclusion that it is the kind of work I should prefer above all others.’ ”

“ ‘My boy, I am proud of you,’ said my father, quickly. ‘I don’t know that I have ever been so proud of you before, even when you were first shown to me on the day you were born. I remember there were signs on you then that the angels hadn’t brought you by the easiest way. Hereafter there’ll be a change in this household. You are to conduct morning and evening prayer, and you’ll see that I’ll attend. Here’s my hand on it, Roy. You’ll have every kind of help and consideration from me. Now, I must ask you to leave me. Young Briefer is trying to make a brilliant reputation by proving that, when the law said a load of wood, it meant a car of dynamite, and I’ll be —— (I’ll have to stop that now) if those fool legislators haven’t enacted a subsection that compels me to allow his point.’ ”

“ ‘I have told you this, Mr. Woodford, because we are growing to be very good friends, and I should like you to know how kind and considerate my father has been. He not only has left me entirely free in the matter, but has highly approved of my choice.’ ”

Dayton thoroughly enjoyed the companionship of young Morris, and was sorry when the afternoon gave signs of drawing to a close.

“ ‘I am thinking of going over to see the Malton family, probably to-morrow,’ ” he said, as he was leaving. “ ‘I told Malton himself on one occasion that I should.’ ”

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"It will be very kind of you to do so," said Morris. "I myself have become quite a friend of the family. Even Miss Edith, whom you heroically rescued, regards me now with a favorable eye."

The next day Dayton looked up the card on which Malton had written his address. Taking a street car, he soon found himself approaching the outskirts of the city. The house was a poor one, but had a garden about it. On going within the gate, he perceived that everything was quite neatly kept. This, as Dayton knew, could not be the result of Dave's work. When he knocked at the door, it was opened by Grace. Dayton introduced himself as an acquaintance of her father. He gave his name, Mr. Woodford.

"I feel as if I already know you well," answered Grace. "Mr. Morris speaks often of you. I saw you at the church the night he led the meeting."

She expressed her pleasure at his taking the trouble to call. Her father had told them about his promise to come before long. Then she led him to a neat but very plainly furnished room which evidently served other purposes than that of a state reception chamber for the rare visitors. The floor was covered with a rag carpet, that fast disappearing relic of the thrift of our forefathers. There was a plain table in the room and likewise some chairs of various size and age.

"If mother were here, she would insist on taking you into the parlor, for we have such a thing, although you know we are not wealthy." She smiled slightly. "But I think it would be very stuffy and hot there this afternoon. This is the coolest and most comfortable part of the house. You will not mind?"

GRACE

"Miss Malton," said Dayton, "you must not treat me in the least ceremoniously. I believe in comfort rather than style. This room has a beautiful outlook as well."

From the open window could be had an unobstructed view of the slope of Royal Mountain, which appeared to be close at hand in spite of its distance. At Grace's suggestion Dayton placed his chair so as to face the window. She likewise took a seat so that she could look out. The table was between them. Upon it was a work-basket containing some odds and ends of mending. An open Bible lay near Grace's hands. One or two other books were close by.

"Do you know," said Dayton, "that I am beginning to have a fair acquaintance with Royal Mountain? Do you see that tree which stands out alone against the sky on the left near the summit? There is a big stone under it, and I was sitting there the day before yesterday about this time, wishing my car were an aeroplane and I a disciple of Wilbur Wright. For the machine had been left with a farmer at the foot of the hill, and I, miscalculating my power of resistance to the heat, had set out to make my way through the perfect chaos of rocks that is to be found below that point. But, after the discovery of a spring with the best-tasting water on the North American continent and an hour's rest and enjoyment of the magnificent view, I felt as if I had been fully repaid for all my exertions."

"Do you know that I was looking out just at that time and wondering about that tree which I have so often noticed from here? I had no idea that anybody I knew was sitting in the shade of it."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Yes, I was there, and I could see almost every house in Royaltown. Beyond was the vast blue lake. One could observe the white lines of the waves as they swept up on the shallows near the shore."

"The lake seems always very beautiful to me in calm or in storm, in winter or in summer."

"From the mountain," continued Dayton, "one can also trace plainly the course of the Clearwater River by the trees that line its banks."

"I am sorry, Mr. Woodford, that I have never thanked you for saving the life of my little sister. It is a very small thing to say 'I thank you' for such a great service. Yet I have been so ungrateful as not to do even that when I saw you in the church. But the great change that had come over my father made me quite forget everything else."

"It was in truth a matter of no importance, Miss Malton. People made too much of the whole affair. Anyone with ordinary brains would have seen that something was wrong and would have made haste to get the little girl out of the way. But I should like to have you tell me about your own life. I had a talk with your father on one occasion not long ago. I happened to meet him under such circumstances as made it natural for us to become well acquainted, and he gave me an interesting account of his life. I know that you have had to be brave, truly brave. Your father esteems you highly."

Grace flushed with pleasure. It was evident that she loved her father, and was strangely delighted to learn through the lips of another how much he appreciated her.

"I have prayed for my father for many, many years," she said. "My prayers have at last been

GRACE

answered, and I feel as if earth had suddenly become heaven."

To tell the truth, Dayton was somewhat embarrassed at hearing this frank expression of religious faith. Like most modern men, and probably like most ancients as well, he was accustomed to avoid such revelations. Theology he might freely discuss, but the personal experiences of the soul were on a different footing.

"Have you lived here long?" he asked at last rather lamely.

"For quite a long time. But I remember living in another place before this. Father was not with us then. Mother used to cry very often, especially on Sunday afternoons. She told me that father had gone away one day and had never come back. But she believed he would return some time. At last he came back. It was in the night that he returned. When I got up in the morning, I saw a man in the kitchen. My mother was laughing and crying at the same time. She said that it was my father. He was going to take us away to a beautiful place. He would never leave us again, and we should be always happy. I was a little frightened of my father at first. But at last I ventured to sit on his knee, and he called me very strange and amusing names.

"A short time afterward we moved to Royaltown, and we have lived here ever since. But there is something that I have never told any one before. I feel now as if I might tell it to you, partly because I am so happy that all the dreadful fear is past, and partly because you have been so kind. I have always been afraid that there was some terrible secret in my father's life, some reason why he was

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

away so long that time. I have dreaded waking up some morning and finding strange men here who would take him away with them. Now I feel that such fears are gone forever."

It was a simple little story, but it touched Dayton to an unusual degree. Knowing fully what Grace probably never dared to suggest even to herself, he was able to realize the exceeding pathos of such an existence as hers. The constant apprehension of unknown danger, the strong affection that was natural in a daughter for her father, the recognition of his faults, and the fervent entreaties to the Divine Power in his behalf, were the elements of a not entirely unfamiliar and yet not the less affecting tale.

The moment's silence that ensued was broken by the arrival of Grace's mother. Mrs. Malton entered by the rear door, having just come in from a visit to a neighbor, a quite unusual proceeding for her. She looked exactly what she was, a hard-working woman who had taken the bitter with the sweet in a spirit which was midway between the stoicism of the educated mind and the dull apathy of the unlearned. Of the mystic's exaltation which was the characteristic of her daughter, she possessed little, if any. The monotonous drudgery of her life had not, however, entirely destroyed a certain alertness of manner which must have been her chief charm in the days of her youth.

The unexpected sight of a handsome young stranger in the room took her aback for a moment. But Grace quickly came forward and with a native dignity introduced Dayton as the gentleman who had so bravely rescued Edith.

"It is hard for me to tell you, Mr. Woodford, how pleased I am to meet you and be able to thank you for what you have done for us in saving the little girl's life. I am very proud to have you call. But, Grace, you should have shown Mr. Woodford into our front room. It is hardly respectful of you to entertain him out here."

"No, no, Mrs. Malton," protested Dayton, "Miss Malton has entertained me most hospitably. She could not have taken me to any place where I should have been more comfortable this hot afternoon, and from which I should have had a more magnificent view. These are two advantages that I always appreciate."

"Indeed, Mr. Woodford, it is a pleasant room. Many and many's the time that I have sat here and watched the sun shining on Royal Mountain, when it has been dark and cloudy here in Royaltown. Then I would feel happy, because it would remind me that the sun is always shining though it may be hidden by the clouds for a little while. That is one of the things I have learned from the mountain which have been useful to me in life. Then you can see all the houses and farms on it so plainly up to near the top where the land is not good, and is anyway too steep to be ploughed. I have often thought of the people living in those houses, and how pleasant it must be for them to be always seeing the city and the lake in front."

"I have myself," said Dayton, "been much interested in those farms on the mountain slope. But I imagine peculiar difficulties must sometimes arise in agricultural work upon them."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"You are quite right, Mr. Woodford," replied Mrs. Malton. "In winter time the ground sometimes becomes very icy and slippery. A farmer there who is rather poor had only one horse. One day when it was going to the spring to get a drink it fell all the way down the farm and broke its neck."

Even the very serious Grace smiled at this tragic tale.

"Mother," she said, "Mr. Woodford will think that you are yarning." Then turning to Dayton: "You must know, Mr. Woodford, that my mother used to delight us all by the vast number of stories which she had to tell."

"You should not on any account give up the habit, Mrs. Malton. There is nothing like a good story to add zest to life . . . I have had the pleasure of meeting two of your children. You have also a son, have you not?"

"Yes, Gaven. He is named after my father, Thomas Gaven. He is out working for a neighbor just now."

"Does he work out regularly?"

"He does all he can get to do, but he has no steady job."

"I think I could find a place for him with me, if he would be willing to make himself generally useful about the house and stables."

"I am sure he would be delighted to work for you."

"If you will ask him to call at my house some time to-morrow morning I shall see what I can do for him."

"He will be certain to be there, Mr. Woodford, and I think you will find him reliable. He may have

his peculiar ways, but he is not saucy and will mind what he is told. It is very kind of you to take an interest in him. I don't know how I can thank you enough after what you have done for Edith."

"That was of no account at all, Mrs. Malton. It was a very simple, very unheroic act."

Dayton finally bade adieu to an exceedingly happy, almost tearful mother and daughter.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT ELLSONS'.

Next morning, true to the arrangement made by Mrs. Malton, the youthful Gaven put in an appearance. He was a good-sized boy and appeared to be respectful and willing to work. Dayton asked him a number of questions, rather with the purpose of judging his character by his answers than of eliciting any new or necessary information.

"What is your name?"

"Thomas Gaven Malton, but the kids call me Gav."

"I suppose that you are no relation to Gavroche."

"Never heard of him, Mr. Woodford. I suppose I ain't."

"You haven't read any of Victor Hugo?"

"Oh, he's a kid in a book, is he? No, I haven't read the person you name, but I know all about Henty and Dumas."

"Do you go to school?"

"Oh, off and on, when there's no work to be had. But I read a lot."

"How old are you?"

"Thirteen past."

"Would you like to come and take a permanent position with me?"

"I'd like it pretty well, Mr. Woodford."

"Have you any preference as to the amount of wages you would like to receive?"

"I'll leave that with you, Mr. Woodford."

"Very well, you may come for a week, and at the end of that time I shall know what your services are worth. If we suit each other and you are engaged permanently, you will be expected to attend school as soon as it opens. You may sleep here or at your own home, as you prefer. If you go to the garden at the back of the house, you will find Mr. Rivers, who will tell you what you are to do. Now, good-bye for the present. I expect that we shall be pretty good friends, Gav."

After this brief interview, Dayton set to work and quickly completed the most necessary portion of his business correspondence. Then he took out a letter which he had received from his father the day before and read over a certain portion of it several times. He could almost imagine the expression on his father's face while the latter penned the lines. This part of the letter was as follows:

"I have observed, Dayton, that you mention in your letters only persons of the male sex and those members of the contrary division of mankind who are either much older or much younger than yourself. Now, from my knowledge of the world I should judge that there must be in Royaltown and its neighborhood certain young women, one or more than one, who are of like age with you. Kindly inform me if I am not right."

Dayton and his father had always been close comrades, and, under ordinary circumstances, the young man would have had no hesitation in telling his father all about his affair of the heart. He had refrained from making any mention of it merely because he had felt that it was almost impossible

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

to write in such a way as would give a correct impression of the mysterious difficulties which he had encountered. But, since his father had noticed his reticence and had expressed himself in this humorous manner about it, the young man determined to make a "clean breast" of the whole matter, concluding with a statement of his belief that, though hope might "spring eternal," small reason existed in the present case for being optimistic. The task was found to be a long and difficult one, and, when it was completed, Dayton felt in a particularly melancholy mood. Nothing further had occurred since the trip to Port Clearwater. It had been announced on the day following that eventful occasion that Constance had left town on a visit to some distant friends. That she was still absent he knew, for he had met Mr. Lyman on the street the day before, and the latter had spoken of his daughter as intending to be out of town for some time.

When Mr. Woodford, senior, received his son's letter, he perused it a great many times carefully. At last he remarked to himself:

"How true it is that the man playing the game can never comprehend the situation as well as the observer! It is strange that Dayton seems not to suspect what is evident at once to another person. I wonder whether or not it would be better for me to pack up and go north. Quite probably I could set matters right for the young people. But no! If she is of true stuff, she will give him a chance before she takes any irrevocable step. The final result will be more satisfactory, if the love affair proceeds along its own natural lines. I do not believe much in a *deus ex machina* in matters of the kind."

AT ELLSONS'

Dayton had not ceased to cultivate the acquaintance of the Ellson family. Whatever slight feeling of reserve might have remained even after the cordiality of his first reception had been entirely dispelled during later visits. William and he had become the most intimate of friends. They had tramped over the farm together, William explaining the various problems that it presented until Dayton said he was sure that he knew every furrow in it. The young American also followed with much interest William's experiments in the laboratory.

Likewise he was admitted to terms of affectionate intimacy with the ladies of the household. Thus he became a fellow listener with Lotta to the reading of the stories which Mrs. Ellson contributed to various periodicals. His advice and criticism were often asked, and, although he had received no special literary training, he was able to be of service by making an occasional suggestion or proffering some useful bit of information. He came and went like any member of the family. Although no question was ever asked him, he felt that all three of his friends had guessed something of the trouble that was oppressing him, and were manifesting their sympathy in various subtle ways.

Meanwhile, he had been devoting a good deal of his leisure time to filling in the details of the map of the county. After a long and pleasant outing he came late one evening to the Ellson farm. As everybody had retired, he went straight to his room, after putting his motor-car in quarters for the night. He slept well and long. At the breakfast table he found Lotta alone.

"How delighted I am to see my American brother!

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

I knew you must be here, because Ann said that she had seen your car. I hope yours and mine did not quarrel during the night."

"I am glad to be back, too, Lotta. I think the cars must be on friendly terms by this time. Where is Mrs. Ellson?"

"Mother is not coming down. She has had breakfast in her room. She is not feeling very well this morning."

"I hope it is nothing serious."

"Oh, no, not at all. She has a slight headache this morning, she says, and is going to be a little lazy."

"I should be sorry to think of her as being ill. I consider that it is particularly trying to be unwell during beautiful weather."

"Mother enjoys very good health, and she will be certain to be up and as well as ever this afternoon. But what will you have, Dayton? Here is Ann with the eggs. You must have some, for there is a story connected with them."

Dayton was helped at once.

"Ann, you must sit down and have your breakfast, too," said Lotta, "and we'll make a big confession to Dayton."

Ann Glover, it may be mentioned, was the daughter of James Glover, the house manager, and has been already referred to. At school she was a clever student, and kept Lotta's mind more on the difficult side of book-learning than would otherwise have been the case.

"Ann's mother and father," continued Lotta, "are in Royaltown this morning, and so Ann and I are doing the cooking. We have got on very nicely, and

there is nothing here on the table that will really poison you. The only serious trouble we have had has been with the eggs."

"These eggs seem to be very palatable," remarked Dayton.

"Oh, those have been cooked since. When we put the first on to boil, we looked at the clock and calculated the proper length of time. After a while Ann said, 'The eggs are probably boiled by now.' We glanced at the clock, but the time seemed not to be up yet. Then we went on with other work. At last Ann said, 'There's something funny about those eggs. They must surely be done.' She went over to look closer at the time. 'Land's sakes alive!' she exclaimed instantly. 'The clock's stopped!' The eggs were as hard as rocks. When I got my watch I saw that they must have been on about fifteen minutes."

After all had enjoyed the incident, Lotta said to Dayton that she hoped he was not going back to town immediately.

"No," replied the young man, "I want to see William for a little. After that I have no settled plans."

"Then please come to my library afterwards. Ann and I are going to do the work quickly this morning. We shall give the house a 'lick and a promise,' allowing it to wait till a more suitable occasion for a good sweeping and dusting. We shall be ready to receive you at your lordship's convenience."

"I shall be delighted to be received as soon as I come back. I have some of the completed sections of my county map to show you. They may be interesting."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"How charmed we shall be! Ann, let us clear these dishes off the table at once."

Dayton found William at work on the summit of a load of sheaves. It was the occasion of "hauling in." As soon as the farmer saw his friend, he called to him:

"You will find a camp-chair in the shade of that tree yonder. Use it or the grass as you prefer. I shall be down in a few minutes."

When William came over, Dayton said that he did not wish to interrupt if it was a busy day.

"No, this is rather a slack time. Our work is pretty well completed up to date. We have plenty of help, and just now I was working chiefly for form's sake. In fact, I have spent most of the time under this tree going through that report on the dairy industry which came in by the mail yesterday."

"Any interesting news since I was here last?" inquired Dayton.

"Not very much. But there is going to be a presentation at the schoolhouse to-night. One of our neighbors sold his farm this spring. He has finally succeeded in settling up his business and leaves to-morrow for the West. As he has been quite prominent in church matters, a large number of the congregation will no doubt be present. The church is being repaired just now, and, in consequence, the affair will be held in the schoolhouse. It will be to a certain extent interesting, because our reeve, who is a pompous person, has been asked to preside, and he generally provides some unusual incident not mentioned in the programme. He is, moreover, an enthusiastic politician and conducted

a memorable campaign some years ago. Would you care to attend?"

"By all means. I have heard some good stories of the reeve already, but I have not had the pleasure of meeting him. I shall take a run down to the city this afternoon and be back in time to go."

"Come back for dinner, and we shall have one of our usual discussions before we start."

"Yes, thank you, I shall. This morning I have promised to show my new map to the girls."

"Good-bye for the present. I shall drop in, too, perhaps, in an hour."

When Dayton arrived in Lotta's library, he found the two young people already there. It was a very pretty and cheerful room, and during her years of occupancy Lotta had thoroughly feminized it and adapted it to her use. The only fault she found with it was that it was somewhat far from her bedroom. "I feel rather divided," she would sometimes say. She continued to sleep in a room near to Mrs. Ellson's, as she had done in her more youthful years. It was the desire of both mother and daughter that the close association should not be interrupted.

This was not by any means Dayton's first appearance beyond the threshold, for William and he were very constant visitors to "the shrine of the goddess," as they said. Several charming rainy afternoons had been passed within the precincts, when the chatter of the tongues inside quite equalled the pitter-patter of the drops out of doors, though as Ann, who was thoroughly Canadianized, said in the local language, "it rained pitchforks and sawlogs for handles."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

The sheets of the map were spread out on the table for inspection, and the young people gathered round them.

"This is only the south end of the county," explained Dayton. "Judge Morris knows a person who has done a good deal of work on the north end. He is the principal of a high school in a town up there. The judge says that this gentleman will be only too glad to place his results at our disposal. You should be informed that the judge and your humble servant are collaborating on a great work which is to be known as the 'County History and Atlas, by Morris and Woodford.' Thus do I become an author. The inception of this remarkable volume came about in this way. I had done a little rough work on a map of a few of the townships. I had thereby gained some knowledge of local affairs. One day I happened to be talking with the judge and revealed some interest in such matters. He took fire at once, said he had gathered together quite a large amount of material for a county history, but had never had patience enough to put it into final form. He suggested that we unite our forces, fill up the gaps in the history, and print it with a detailed atlas. We wrangled a while over the financial arrangements. The judge wanted to pay the whole cost of publication, if I would put the contents in order. Of course I would not listen to this. I said that I would pay half in any case, and I ought to pay the whole, for he was providing the greater part of the material. 'No, Mr. Woodford,' he protested, 'if you had not come here and been willing to take the matter up, my manuscripts would probably have been used to light the fire by some

intelligent descendant, who would no doubt have complained that the stuff was not very good even for such a purpose.' After a great deal of discussion, we finally reached the half-and-half basis. We are going to fix a price at which the book will be offered for sale, but we shall probably destroy all chances of profits by gifts of complimentary copies. Still, as a canvasser for an encyclopædia once explained to me, we shall have our reward in having 'built a genuinely great work.'

"Now," continued Dayton, "there is a certain kind of humor to be found on a map. When I looked at the names of the townships of the province, I found some rather peculiar ones. The judge explained most of them. Three are the names of the pet dogs of a prominent lady in olden times, 'Tiny,' 'Tay' and 'Flos.' There are also quite a number of Spanish words in the list. These mean 'butterfly,' 'fox,' and so on. Thus we find both domestic and wild animals. Your own township of Downing, the judge thinks, was originally 'Drowning man' or 'Drowning squaw'; he was uncertain which. I suggested 'nigger.' Unfortunately, the man, the squaw or the nigger went to the bottom. Finally, the rest of the name was changed, perhaps because somebody thought of 'Downing Street.' In the case of these other townships of our county, the Latin tongue seems to have held sway. Here are 'Castoria' and 'Gemini.' What does 'Gemini' mean, Ann?"

"Twins," answered the young lady.

"Was it not wise of them to put Castoria next to the Twins?" remarked Lotta.

Meanwhile Ann had detected the picture of a hog traced near one of the side-roads.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

“That drawing,” explained Dayton, “is in imitation of the ships and animals that the earlier geographers were in the habit of putting on their maps. You see that we have the ‘Laconic’ down here on the way to Port Clearwater. But there is a brief story about the discovery of the hog. Mr. Morris and Mr. Glassford, whom Mr. Morris always calls ‘Glass-case,’ accompanied me the other day for an outing in the car. We were passing along the road marked on the map when we saw in a place where a spring had formed a deep and delightful bed of mud a hog gracefully afloat exactly as if he were swimming. He looked almost too comfortable, and we stopped for a moment to admire him. ‘What a fine effect!’ said Mr. Glassford. ‘It is truly an odd and haunting resemblance,’ said Mr. Morris. ‘If he had a tall collar on his neck and a more serene look about the eyes, the strange likeness to Glass-case would become clearer.’”

The girls enjoyed the explanation immensely. But they had at last to excuse themselves, because they were to-day responsible for the preparation of luncheon. Just then William entered. He glanced over the sheets with much interest, commenting on points here and there.

“I notice the name ‘Hatpin Lake,’” he said at last. “That must be the pond on Stewart’s Creek that caused all the trouble the day we were over at the Clearwater. The name is new, is it not?”

“Yes, that is my addition to the geographical nomenclature of this region. I found that the body of water had never had a name, and so I chose one suggested by Miss Sheldon’s description of the cause of the flood.”

"Did you discover anything further about that event? Have you been up there?"

"Yes, Glassford, Morris and I were over not long ago. We left Gav with the car and struck across the fields. We got hold of the owner of the place and found him interesting. He described the affair in some such way as this. I shall try as best I can to imitate his style:

" 'My son Bill had been out fishing in the early morning on the same day as the flood, and after the rain began he came home like a drowned rat. The next morning I was over and saw something was wrong. When I came in, I said to Bill, "What did you do with the lake yesterday?" "I did nothing with it. Ain't it there?" he asked, not liking the joke. "No, Bill, it ain't," I said, "It's gone." "The lake gone?" he said. "Yes, it must be gone, for it ain't there." "Gee-roo-salem!" says Bill. "I came in," said I, "to see if you were carrying it about with you or had taken it away and lost it somewhere." ' ' ' "

" 'I suppose you regret the loss of your lake,' Morris remarked after the story was concluded.

" 'I was looking over the place,' the farmer returned, 'and it is pretty narrow at the one end. I guess I can fix up some kind of a dam that will hold, and a few heavy rains will set matters all right again.'

" 'Will not the people of Port Clearwater require that a specially strong dam be constructed?' Morris objected. 'They will be afraid of another Johnstown flood.'

" 'Oh, I won't let that worry me,' was the answer. 'A cleaning out would do the Port good. I stayed

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

overnight once at a hotel there, and I came to the conclusion after I blew out the light and went to bed that there was a large population in the building which was not mentioned on the taxroll or in the census. In fact, the village is over-populated. But if you don't mind, I should like to know the names of the gentlemen I have the honor of talking with.'

" 'Pardon me,' Morris said, and he introduced the company.

" 'Are you Judge Morris' son?' the farmer then asked.

" 'Yes,' was the answer.

" 'Well, now, I guess I know the old judge rather well. He's done a great deal of good for this part of the country in one way and another. I remember when the Orangemen on the ninth concession, those ginger-whiskered chaps up there, got into a row with the Catholic Settlement on the blind line, and we were all afraid murder would be done by somebody, the judge heard about it, and said that, if they were brought up before him, he would see to the hanging of the whole lot. That stopped the trouble. But the judge is a powerful man to swear. A fellow on the docks at Royaltown, who has heard the best of the high-class swearing on the lakes, told me that for genuine vigor and originality in this line the judge rated pretty well up. He had heard His Honor once or twice elucidating his full private opinions about some shipment or other that had gone astray.'

" 'I was sorry for Morris, who has a very high opinion of his father and a great liking for him, especially since the judge has supported him so enthusiastically in his decision to take up ministerial

work. But the judge's peculiarity being a matter of notoriety, Glassford chuckled furtively. We now returned to the car."

William was greatly amused and interested. "I think I know the old chap," he said. "He occasionally comes here with some horses to sell. Though by no means a respecter of persons, he seems to be a decent sort of fellow all the same."

At the sound of the luncheon bell the two young men rose.

"By the way," said William, "Morris telephones me that he is coming up this evening, and will go over to the schoolhouse with us. He will probably be here for dinner."

Interesting and not wholly unexpected news, thought Dayton.

Dinner that evening was a jolly affair, because Morris was irresistible as a provider of fun. Afterwards William and Dayton had their usual talk, while Lotta and Morris were occupied at the piano. The latter had a really fine voice, and sang one or two songs to the delight of the company. Mrs. Ellson, feeling somewhat fatigued in consequence of her indisposition of the morning, had excused herself quite early, leaving the duties of hostess to her daughter.

When the hour arrived, the three young men walked over to the schoolhouse. As they came up, they saw that a considerable crowd had already gathered, part remaining outside, while part had gone into the building. William knowing, and being known by, everybody, introduced his friends to any local persons of importance whose acquaintance they had not made before. Morris, because

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

of his father's position in the county, was by no means regarded as a stranger in the community.

At last the meeting being called to order inside, all lingerers made haste to enter. The school building was of the usual type of the somewhat older class. In front appeared a blackboard of remorselessly inky blackness. It was considered a point of honor among the children who were assigned the duty of cleaning the board, to keep it absolutely without blemish. A large map of the Dominion of Canada hung prominently on a side wall, displaying the imperial expanse from the Bay of Fundy to the Yukon. Certain attempts at adorning the bareness of the room had evidently been made. A few flower-pots were to be seen in the windows.

The reeve of the township, Mr. William Johnston, took the chair as announced. First, a short programme was given. Many of the numbers were undeniably good, and all were favorably received by the audience, who of course knew the performers intimately. Finally, the chairman, after casting his eye on the arctic islands of the Dominion, then allowing it to traverse the regions about Hudson Bay, and ultimately settling it on the more balmy climate of the Niagara fruit district, began with a splendid burst of oratory:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have met here on an occasion which does us honor (applause), that will always be remembered as a day we delight to honor, I mean this occasion when Brother Bates is departing from us. (Some consternation, but drowned in the general applause.) He has lived among us many weary years, I mean that they were not weary for him, but rather for us. (A painful silence

AT ELLSONS'

throughout the audience, with a feeling of expectancy among the more unregenerate youth at the back.) Ladies and gentlemen, I am under the impression that I have made a painful error. I mean that the years Brother Bates has spent in our midst have been weary only in a general way, and not particularly of that nature either for him or for us."

The orator, having now "struck his gait" (as Morris remarked), proceeded steadily to outline the nature of the feelings that were being affected and the character of the ties that were being severed on this occasion. In the eloquent pause which finally ensued, the departing brother was asked to step forward. He proved to be a bright, active man, who was held in high esteem, as one might judge by the hearty applause that greeted his appearance. But Mr. William Johnston was not the person to allow an audience a free hand in expression. With a wave of the hand he imposed restraint. He resumed his speech, dwelling now upon the influence for good which Mr. Bates had exercised.

"I can name in this community," said the speaker, "no man who has done so much good for the Conservative cause."

A silence followed, fearful and premonitory. Some one was seen to rise near the platform and seek to approach Mr. Johnston's ear. But unfortunately he took his stand too far off, and, therefore, the whisper became plainly audible throughout the building:

"You mean the cause of religion, not the Conservative cause, brother."

Mr. Johnston at once made the correction. Then, in a loud and agitated whisper, he asked the person

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

who had risen to his aid, "Did I say the *Conservative* cause?"

This was more than any audience could stand. Amid the general commotion it was never clearly known how the presentation was made. The meeting came to an end in a scene of considerable merriment. The occasion was such an excellent one that the youthful and less decorous element was inclined to take some advantage of it. Though an effort was made to restrain the goodhumored disturbers, it was half-hearted. A few loose seats were overturned.

But Mr. Johnston was a man with whom it was necessary to reckon. Surrounding himself with full pomp and circumstance, he determined at all hazards to maintain the honors of the day. With a voice that could not fail to rivet for the moment the attention of every one present, he called, "I am William Johnston, Esquire, reeve of the township, justice of the peace, and I intend to put the law in force."

It is easy to imagine what followed. As to how far the law was to be enforced, there could remain no doubt.

The three young men, walking back through the fields, could hear far away along the moonlit roads that this person or that was the reeve of the township and that the law would be enforced.

"Mr. Johnston was evidently in his very best form," remarked Morris, as later he and Dayton felt the motor-car take a firm grip of the road leading cityward.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE.

By next morning's mail Dayton received a dainty little note. No need of his opening it to know from whose beloved hand it came. He scarcely dared for the moment to think of what message it might bring. Did fate intend to give him another chance, or was she about to seal finally the condition of things as they were?

Taking a paper-knife that lay on his desk, he slit the envelope. He read and re-read the note. Constance had returned the day before from a visit with friends out of town. She would like to have him call that afternoon. Simply a friendly invitation, such as he might have received in the early days of their intercourse. But what a chasm lay between the two epochs! He felt half angry at first. Was this fair-faced girl a monster who played with human destinies, untroubled of conscience, and, when what she considered the proper time had come, did she calmly say to the victims of her mad sport, "Let us cease playing, let all be as before"? But no! such a supposition was wildly impossible. Had he not received the most convincing proof that there was some quite different explanation? Constance's attitude on the last occasion of their meeting had certainly not been that of a ruthless siren. Whatever might be the true solution of the enigma, he was confident that Constance was the innocent vic-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

tim of some pitiless power in the background. This little note might be penned by the hand of despair. It might be the last hopeless call to him for rescue. He would go that afternoon, be frank and resolute and firm. Any opportunity that might present itself, he would seize. He felt a mighty desire to fling himself into a contest with fate. To the strong spirit of youth it was supremely maddening to be forced to yield the field without a struggle.

At the door of Mr. Lyman's residence the servant told him Miss Lyman had announced that she would receive her visitors in the little garden at the side of the house. She was not at present there, but would be down shortly. Would he wait inside, or would he prefer to go at once to the garden?

Dayton noticed something familiar about the voice and face of the servant. He looked again.

"Why, you must be Miss Malton," he exclaimed.

"Yes, I am Grace Malton. You will no doubt be surprised to see me here. The regular servant is ill, and I am taking her place. I often do work of this kind, when mother can spare me."

"I am very glad to have particular friends at"—court, he was going to say, but checked himself—"any place where I happen to be. How is Mrs. Malton?"

"Mother is quite well always now, though she was not in good health during the early part of the summer. She is glad that you have found Gaven suitable, and that he is getting on so nicely."

"How is your father of late?"

Grace's eyes shone.

"Oh, he is so changed! He is never away at night now, but always stays at home. He has regular work

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE

during the day, and we are really quite prosperous. But best of all, he and mother and I walk off together to church, as we have never done in our lives before."

"And how is little Miss Edith?"

"She is very well, thank you."

"Now, if you will conduct me, I shall go to the garden to await Miss Lyman's coming."

Grace led the way.

As they passed on, a thought occurred to Dayton. He had come determined to employ every measure to rescue Constance from what he was sure was some great trouble. Would it not be right to make use of the means which Providence seemed to place ready to his hand? In any case, it would be no harm to assure himself of Grace's assistance, if it should prove to be of value. Half at hazard he framed his request:

"Would you be willing to do a favor for me, if I were to ask it?"

"I should be willing to do anything that you might ask me. I know that you would never require me to do what was not right."

"Will you obey me rather than your mistress this afternoon, should occasion arise?"

"Do you think it would be right for me to disobey my mistress? I shall accept your answer as my duty, for I trust you implicitly. Besides, I am a stranger in this house. I know that you are not."

"I think it would be right in this case. I am grateful to you for your promise, and I rely upon you."

The garden was quite a secluded spot, for it was enclosed all about. But vines and high bushes were so arranged as to conceal the stone wall and latticed

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

fences that were the means of separating it from the outside world. The house was situated at the top of a somewhat steep slope, and there happened to be no buildings at this side to hide the majestic form of Old Royal. Dayton had by this time come to realize how proud the citizens of Royaltown were of the mountain from which their city derived its name. They regarded its towering figure as the chiefest of all the attractions of which they made no modest boast.

In the centre of the garden was a little summer-house, shaded by a single tree. In the greensward here and there were to be seen some dainty flower-beds. It was a place where one might sit and dream contented, while Royal Mountain marked the gentle passage of the hours like a huge sundial.

Dayton awaited Constance's coming in the summer-house. He looked across at the mountain. What extraordinary scenes the wise old owl of a hill must have gazed down upon! That in which he was about to take part was only one among a countless number. How many human figures must have acted out their little joys and sorrows before his eyes! Red man and white man, they must have kept him busy trying to guess what was the meaning of all the pageant.

Dayton heard a soft, rustling step on the grass. He glanced up and saw that it was Constance. She looked as usual, and yet strangely inscrutable. Much of her brightness of color she appeared to have recovered. The greeting was formal, quite intentionally so on each side. Constance spoke first.

"I am glad that you have come. I was not sure that you were in town."

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE

"I was pleased to know that you had returned," said Dayton, "and I must thank you for giving me so early an opportunity of meeting you."

"For a long time I have owed a visit to some very dear friends. I enjoyed myself much while I was with them. But I am glad to be back to town."

"Will you remain in Royaltown the rest of the summer, Miss Lyman?"

"I expect that I shall. There is no place like home, you know. Yesterday I felt like a little girl again, when my mother welcomed me back."

"How is Mrs. Lyman?"

"Mother is in even better health than usual. I believe that she is as energetic as any woman could possibly be. There was an accident in one of our workshops early this afternoon. One of the workmen had his hand injured. She heard of it a few minutes ago, and is already off to his home to see that he is properly looked after."

"Mrs. Lyman is deservedly one of the most popular ladies in Royaltown," said Dayton, warmly.

"Yes, mother is truly kindhearted. It is not possible for her to know of suffering without striving in some manner to relieve it. How I love to be back under her care! Everything, too, around the house seems to be welcoming me. Even Old Royal yonder, in his calm way, looks as if he had a smile for me. I have never been much away from home."

"I believe I am growing fond of Royal too, although I suspect that he still regards me as a foreigner."

"He will soon accept you as one of his friends. All residents in Royaltown are peculiarly under his care."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"But I shall not remain long in Royaltown, unless you change your former decision."

"I cannot."

"But you must."

"It is a bold man who says 'must' to a woman," was her quick answer.

"It is sometimes one's duty to insist."

"I cannot yield, Dayton, and I must not."

"But you say you love me."

"You are torturing me. Cannot you see what you are doing?"

"I am going to be deliberately brutal, if it is necessary."

"Surely I have not been mistaken in you. Surely you are a gentleman."

"I prefer to be called simply a *man*. That word should stand for all the good which is implied in 'gentleman,' and for more as well. The word 'gentleman' as sometimes used appears to mean a person who will not jump into the water and rescue a lady from drowning, merely because they have not been introduced."

"I appeal, then, to your manhood."

"My manhood calls imperatively upon me to rescue you."

"But if I do not wish to be rescued?"

"Yet you say you love me. Am I to believe that?"

"Yes, Dayton, I truly do love you. But you are terribly cruel."

"I am cruel because I am kind."

"I do not understand you."

"I wish you to realize fully what you are doing in throwing away the happiness of us both."

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE

"I am unutterably sorry for you, Dayton. For myself it does not matter."

"But you should think of yourself."

"You must not—you must not continue to talk to me about this."

"I shall continue until I persuade you, if possible, to change your decision."

"I will not yield, Dayton, because I must not."

"But I insist that you yield."

"I will not. You are presuming too far." She half rose to her feet in protest.

Just then Grace came to announce the arrival of some callers.

"Tell them," said Constance, "that I am receiving here. Be so good as to show them the way."

"Tell them," said Dayton, quietly, "that Miss Lyman is sorry that she cannot receive anybody to-day, but will be glad to see all her friends to-morrow."

Grace went off immediately.

"That was a very strange suggestion you made, Dayton."

"The servant will obey it."

"What do you mean?"

"The servant will say to those people that you are not receiving to-day."

Constance sprang up and pushed an electric button in the wall of the summer-house. In a moment Grace again appeared.

"Where are the callers, Grace?" she asked.

"They have just gone," was the answer.

"You told them that I was not receiving to-day?"

"Yes, Miss Lyman."

"Very well, Grace, that will do."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

As Grace went quietly off, Dayton felt sore compunction, but he was none the less as resolute as ever to seize the present opportunity to come to some more satisfactory understanding with Constance.

"How did you obtain such control over my servant?" Constance demanded.

"I have no control over her. I am acquainted with her family. I asked her to do this for me simply as a favor."

"Of course I shall request her at once to leave the house."

"You will only make it incumbent upon me to provide for her, so that she will suffer no loss by the dismissal."

"You are merciless. I suppose you have planned to keep me here alone with you all the afternoon. But I shall at once withdraw."

"I shall certainly not permit you to leave, until we have more fully discussed the subject which is of such vast importance for us."

"You mean that you will use force, if necessary, to hold me here?"

"Yes, if I am compelled, I shall do so, but with the greatest reluctance."

"But I can cry out. People outside will rescue me."

"If you do so, of course you can be freed. I shall submit to whatever scandal may arise."

"You threaten me, you imprison me. Yet you say you love me!"

"Yes, Constance, I love you better than all else in the world. I mean only to keep you prisoner for so long a time as will suffice us to discuss this great matter quietly between ourselves, and to come to a

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE

decision about it as two rational beings who are conscious that their future happiness is entirely bound up with each other."

"Very well, then, we will discuss it." There were tears in her eyes. Dayton wondered how long he would resist, if she began to weep. He realized that it is very hard for a man to endure the tears of the woman he loves.

But Constance was too brave for tears. How she admired this strong man, who went directly to his aim! How she admired, and alas! how she loved him!

"Constance," he began, "I can scarcely forgive myself for putting compulsion upon you in this way. But since we last met and I learned that you loved me, I have come to feel, with all the force of my nature, that we should not lightly cast away the opportunity of our happiness. I have realized that at any cost we should meet at least once more and look fully at this matter, and make our decision with the entire consciousness of what it must mean. . . . I might, perhaps, with the assistance of what you told me on board the steamer have succeeded in divining the secret which you are guarding in your bosom,"—here he saw Constance grow suddenly pale,—"but I have considered myself as absolutely bound by honor. Therefore, I have no recourse but to ask you for as full a statement as you care to give of the reasons that forbid us to obey the dictates of our hearts. But I do not wish you to tell me any more than you think right or in your opinion the importance of this matter for us demands. I have used forcible means only in order that we should have a brief period of converse together before it may be

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

too late. You are as free as the air in regard to what you may care to say."

"Oh, Dayton, if I did not love and trust you to the uttermost fibre of my soul, I should be resentful of the course you have pursued. But, knowing how utterly I love you and what compelling power my love has upon me, urging me to yield at any cost, I understand fully why you insisted upon this interview. I did not wish to meet you in any but a conventional way, for I could not trust myself to be firm. Other callers I knew would be coming. But I thought that you would probably arrive early, and we should have the semblance of a little talk together beforehand which could not be dangerous under the circumstances. I did not count upon your interfering. Now, Dayton, you have me alone here and at your mercy."

"You completely recover the mastery, Constance, when you say that you are at my mercy. You know that a woman is most powerful when she appeals in that way."

"But of what use is my power, when I am not mistress of myself?"

Constance's look was such as impelled Dayton to seize her in his arms, press her face to his and kiss her again and again.

But suddenly she sprang away.

"Oh, Dayton, I am an infamous woman! I have yielded to your kisses, yet I am promised in marriage to another."

The words seemed to be absolutely wrenched from her by mingled shame and despair.

"Before God," exclaimed Dayton, "none has a right to you greater than mine!"

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE

"We must give up all thought of each other. Leave me to live my life apart."

"Constance, I will not give you up. You ought not to keep your word with that other. Whoever he may be, it is impiously wrong for you to do so."

"It is entirely my duty. I cannot yield."

"Ever this impassable barrier. If our love were true, you would find a way across it."

"I love you, I love you, Dayton! I confess it shamelessly, though I am pledged to another."

"What will be the end of this, Constance?"

"I do not know, Dayton, but I must follow the road to the close."

"You cannot give me one word of hope that you will struggle against the unholy union to which you are promised?"

"I cannot give you any hope except that I shall not hasten the moment of utter despair. It will be kept off till the furthest limit of time."

"You have no other message for me, Constance, nothing that will help me to form some course of action?"

She spoke in terror.

"No, no! you must not act. You will not pursue me, I implore you. If you can help me at any time, I shall hasten to you. You must promise me not to try to do anything, unless I request you."

"Constance, I have used compulsion this afternoon in order to gain one more opportunity of conversing alone with you without risk of being interrupted. Nothing could justify the continued employment of such means. I have tried all the resources at my hand and have failed. The result must be left to the decision of destiny. I shall now

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

withdraw. When we meet again, it may be only as conventional friends. But I do not renounce hope. I have devoted your lips to mine. I am confident that our nuptial day is irrevocably inscribed in the book of fate."

He cast a lingering glance upon Constance, who stood looking at him, dumb with despair. Then he passed into the house. There he met Grace, and said to her, "Go at once to Miss Lyman. She may be in need of you."

Thereupon he went quickly outward to the street.

When Constance found that Dayton had gone, she seemed to lose all her strength. Apparently she must for the moment have lost consciousness, for she awoke to find herself on the floor of the summer-house. Grace came up just then, and was horrified by what she saw.

"Oh, my dear Miss Lyman," she cried, "what has happened? Can I help you?"

She put her arms round the listless figure of Constance and raised her up. The young woman seemed then to recover herself. Tears began slowly to come.

"Did I do wrong, Miss Lyman, to disobey you?"

"You did right, Grace, quite right. It was better that it should happen so."

"You entirely forgive me?"

"Forgive you, Grace! I love you for what you have done. But do not leave me for a long time. I wish you to be with me."

"I shall try to do anything you want of me, Miss Lyman."

"You must call me Constance, dear Grace. Hold

me to you just like that for a little while. How wonderfully calm and good you are!"

"I am not really good, Constance, but I pray every day for help. Are you feeling better now?"

"Yes, I am much better, dear. But you must not leave me."

Dayton, after departing from the house, walked on, indifferent to the direction in which he was going. At last he found himself turning a corner and coming out upon Main Street, directly in front of the office of the *Earth and Mars*. He looked up at the bulletin board, and, allowing his eye to run listlessly down the chronicle of events, he read something as follows:

"Latest Kink in the Great Controversy.—Canada's Duty in regard to Naval Defence.—The Presidential Tour.—The Governor-General Lays a Corner-Stone.—British Politics. Feeding the Suffragettes.—Germany launches a Warship.—Troubles of the French Ministry.—Negro Problem in United South Africa.—Australian Defence.—Winter Coming in Southern Mars. The Polar Cap Begins to Enlarge.—Read the *Earth and Mars*. It has All the News.

As he finished his perusal and was about to turn away, he saw a young man putting up an additional board, inscribed at its top with "Local News." The first words instantly arrested his attention: "Peculiar Automobile Accident.—Mrs. James Lyman Hurt."

Dayton felt that he must have further information at once. He knew that an edition of the paper would be out shortly, because he could see the pressmen making preparations in the basement. But it was impossible for him to wait. No doubt some one inside the building would give him an account of

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

the accident, if he were to ask. He was about to enter when he noticed Smith coming out.

"Mr. Smith, I am indeed glad to see you," he exclaimed. "Could you tell me anything about the accident?"

"You mean the one in which Mrs. Lyman was injured?"

"Yes, was it serious?"

"I think it may turn out to be not so serious after all. To be sure, Mrs. Lyman received a bad fright, and is much bruised. It is a marvel, however, that she escaped with such slight injury."

"How did the accident happen?"

"I saw the whole affair myself. It occurred a little above Manning's store yonder. You can see a crowd there yet. I chanced to be looking out of the office window, upstairs. Mrs. Lyman was in her automobile. Tom Stubbs, the chauffeur, was driving. A little to the left Harvey Wallace was coming down the street with the skittish bay that he has just bought from Fred Andrews. The chauffeur, seeing that Wallace was not controlling the horse very well, stopped his motor. No sooner had he done so than the horse took fright at something on the other side and sprang right into the car. The animal fell somewhat against Mrs. Lyman, but luckily did not strike her badly in his mad plunging before he was got out. It is wonderful that she was not instantly killed."

"Has she been taken home?"

"Yes, at once. Her son, who happened to be not far away, secured the assistance of Dr. Jones, and they placed her in an ambulance. The car has been damaged considerably."

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE

"I must thank you very much for the information you have given me, Mr. Smith."

"Oh, that is a slight matter, not worthy of mention. If you will wait a minute, I can procure a copy of the paper for you."

"Tom," he called down through an open window, "toss us up a paper."

Up came two or three immediately in a hard roll that would have removed Mr. Smith's hat, if he had not most unceremoniously dodged. Loud laughter was heard in the regions below.

After the civilities due on such occasions had been exchanged between the high and the low contending parties, Smith handed Dayton a copy which he had retained.

"You will find the account of the accident on the last page."

Again thanking Mr. Smith for his kindness, Dayton hastened back to the house which he had so recently left.

When he rang, Mr. Lyman himself answered.

"How are you, Mr. Woodford? I am very glad to see you. Come into my den. We'll have a talk. I feel rather shaken up after all the excitement of the accident. I suppose you have heard of it?"

When they were seated, Mr. Lyman added to the details which Dayton had already learned. Mrs. Lyman was now resting quietly. It was believed that no grave danger existed. Unless there should prove to be some internal injury, she ought to be quite well again in a short time. They had good reason for hoping that nothing serious would develop.

"My boy, George, has been a great help to us in this trouble. It is an excellent thing to have a friend

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

in the medical craft. One has a more easy feeling that all is going well. But I must say that I have every confidence in Dr. Jones. He is one of the most straightforward and conscientious men I know."

The two men read over the account of the accident in the *Earth and Mars*.

"I suppose Smith wrote the article," remarked Mr. Lyman. "So far as I know he has his facts down correctly. He is a smart man, Smith! There is only one smarter that I know, and we have him right with us in the factory in the person of our assistant manager, Mr. Richard Charters."

A suspicion at once flashed into Dayton's mind, a suspicion which, moreover, it seemed strange he had not entertained before. Could it be that Charters was his successful rival?

"I have never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Charters," he remarked, with as much calmness as he could assume.

"I do not know that you would care much for him personally. I was speaking of him simply as a machine for the transaction of business. Mr. Charters is not socially gifted."

This was interesting. Dayton thought that it would be within his right to ask another question.

"I suppose, however, that your family and Mr. Charters are well acquainted?"

"No, Mr. Woodford, hardly at all. He comes here occasionally, of course. But I suspect that he is not a favorite. To tell the truth, if I may speak frankly to a person whom I have come to know as intimately as you, I don't like him very well myself. Charters, as I have said, should be considered merely as a business machine, and in that capacity he is

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE

superb. He is truly invaluable for keeping track of a host of details."

Mr. Lyman's words served only to increase the mystery for Dayton. There could be no doubt that some kind of compulsion was being employed to make Constance submissive. Yet Mr. Lyman scarcely seemed such a person as would be anxious to force upon his daughter's acceptance a suitor whom he did not himself like. Thus, after all, it was probably not Charters to whom Constance was so unwillingly bound.

Since Dayton felt that it was neither proper nor useful for him to inquire further as to the relations that existed between Charters and the Lyman household, the conversation drifted off into other channels. At last Constance appeared in the doorway to tell her father that her mother was asking for him. Mr. Lyman at once excused himself and went off to his wife's room.

Thus it came about that the unhappy lovers were alone again after a few hours' separation. But this time they met as two human beings, any more ardent relationship being thrust resolutely aside. Dayton expressed his sympathy for Constance in the period of her trial. Deeply grateful, she smiled at him from eyes that were misty with tears. He held her hand for a little while in his. "In a moment like this," he said, "all else must remain in abeyance except friendship. We are friends, no matter what the future may have in store."

"Yes," said Constance, looking up with sudden brightness. "We are friends, very true friends."

Dayton bent and kissed her on the brow. Constance's color heightened.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Instantly came a blinding, stifling impulse that all but drove him to seize her to him and drown all resistance to his love in a deluge of kisses. But he bravely fought against it, calling himself a brute of untold magnitude.

At last he said, "Constance, I must say good-bye for the present. I hope that Mrs. Lyman will speedily recover from her dangerous experience."

"Before you go, Dayton, I wish to introduce you to two persons who are in the drawing-room. They have called to inquire about mother."

They proved to be Miss Pauline Grandis and Mr. Richard Charters.

Miss Pauline, not without much physical charm of a somewhat Amazonian type, seemed very peculiarly to embody nearly all the qualities that Dayton disliked in a young woman. Being in no respect of a retiring nature, she did not lose any time in endeavoring to create a favorable impression.

"I'm half tickled to death to meet you, Mr. Woodford, for everybody I've run up against during the week I've been in Royaltown has talked of nothing but you. When I said that I hadn't yet got a glimpse of you, they told me to look at the very handsomest man I found in the town, and it would be you, sure."

Having given expression to this stunning compliment, she proceeded to wait for a reply of a suitable kind from Dayton. He struggled with himself, and at last said, though a trifle frigidly, "I am much pleased that my friends have such a good opinion of me."

"And that is not the whole thing either, Mr. Wood-

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE

ford. They spoke of your heroic act in rescuing a little girl."

"I am afraid, Miss Grandis, that my friends are altogether too complimentary to me."

"Oh, no, Mr. Woodford, you come up to all my expectations."

Dayton hardly knew at first whether she wished to make sport of him or was essaying a serious attempt at flattery.

"You almost overwhelm me, Miss Grandis," he said.

"How do you like Royaltown?" she asked.

"I am very much pleased with the city," said Dayton.

"I wish I could get used to the poky little place. I come out here every summer, because mother thinks it better for me to be away from the social whirl for a while for the sake of my health. You know we have such a gay time during the winter, a perfect round of dances, theatre parties and other amusements, that when the summer comes one has not energy enough even to think of the seaside. I have an aunt who lives in Royaltown, and she always persuades mother to have me come here."

Dayton was now aware of the kind of person Miss Grandis really was.

"Are you fond of dancing?" he asked.

"I adore it. I could float forever to the music of a waltz. My partners never fail to compliment me on my dancing."

Dayton was saved from further distressing experiences by a question from Constance, which was addressed to Miss Grandis, and concerned that young lady's aunt.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

It was now Dayton's turn to face Mr. Charters. He had noticed that the latter and Constance had scarcely spoken to each other. The man was an atrocious little bounder, with a habit of throwing out his chest and gazing somewhat unsteadily upward at the person with whom he was conversing.

"You are from the Great Republic, are you not, Mr. Woodford?"

"Yes," said Dayton, "I happen to be from the United States."

"You are, I believe, also from the great metropolis?"

"Yes, I have spent a certain part of my life in New York."

"How do you like the Great Dominion?"

"I have seen very little of your beautiful country, but what I have seen of it has pleased me well."

"Ah, yes, this is a great country. I have had a great mind once or twice to leave it, but the thought of its great prospects has always been too powerful a magnet for me."

Just at this moment it was suggested by somebody (Dayton was not sure but it was by Miss Grandis herself) that the young lady should sing. It was at first thought that Mrs. Lyman's condition might require absolute quiet in the house. But a message quickly came from her that she was feeling even better than was expected, and that she did not wish the house to be turned into a hospital on her account.

Consequently, Miss Grandis delivered herself of a song to Constance's accompaniment. Somewhat to Dayton's surprise her singing was good, and so he felt quite justified in complimenting her upon it.

AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE

But his formal words of praise were cast into the shadow by the glowing tribute of Mr. Charters.

"That is great singing, Miss Grandis," he said. "It would be hard to say which one would prefer, a good dinner or a fine song like that."

With some difficulty Dayton restrained himself, but he noticed that Constance never smiled.

Mr. Charters and Dayton left the house together. Since their path lay in opposite directions, they were to part at the gate. While going down the walk from the house, Mr. Charters took occasion to make the remark, "She's a great girl, that Miss Grandis!"

CHAPTER X.

NUMEROUS PROPOSITIONS.

As the curtain rises, Flava Sheldon and Charlie Stringer are "revealed" sitting in a beautifully-furnished room. They are alone. The soft light of early evening falls upon their faces.

"You wished to speak to me very particularly, Mr. Stringer?"

"Yes, Flava, I did."

"Listen to the boy! By what right do you call a young woman older than yourself by her Christian name, my dear Charles?"

"That is what I wanted to speak to you about."

"You don't mean that you are going to propose?"

"Yes, Flava, although it is rather hard on me when you put it that way."

"Again the Christian name! The daring of the boy. How do you think I should put it?"

"I really don't know. But I am finding it hard to say what I wanted to say."

"Do you know what I should advise you?"

"No, I do not know."

"Don't propose."

"Why, Miss Sheldon?"

"Because I am going to refuse you if you do."

"Why will you refuse me?"

"Because I like you—I like you splendidly."

"Could you not love me?"

NUMEROUS PROPOSITIONS

"Yes, I could, but it would be a sisterly love that I should feel, the love of an older sister or perhaps an aunt. There might even be something grandmotherly about it."

"You are very cruel. You will not listen to me seriously."

"But I am trying to keep you from proposing."

"I am going to propose anyway, Flava."

"Since I am bound to become a sister to you, you may henceforth use my Christian name. But is your mind fully made up?"

"Yes, it is."

"Can I not persuade you to change it?"

"Will you not listen to me, Flava?"

"Yes, Charlie, I will. If it must be, it simply must. But I warn you that the proposal has to be made in the traditional and proper manner."

"How is that?"

"You must go down on your knees to me."

"I can easily do that."

"Well then, down, sir, down!"

Charlie did actually get down, but performed the feat rather awkwardly.

"I believe that you are in the habit of skipping your prayers or saying them in bed," was Flava's remark.

"You are particularly dreadful to me, Flava."

"No, Charlie, I am not. I like you immensely. That is why I don't want you to propose to me."

"But I have made up my mind."

"Very well. Pray begin at once."

"I can't—I mean I can't find words to say when I have to act as if I were on the stage."

"Well, to encourage you, here is my hand to hold.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

How funny it feels in your big paw! You see I am giving you all the help I can."

"You are simply distracting, Flava. I am all mixed up. I don't know what to say."

"Shall I have to tell you what to say and make the proposal to myself, as it were?"

"Flava, I am going to get up off my knees. I am making a fool of myself."

"I cordially agree with your last words, dear Charles. Let us stop proposing and have a pleasant evening together."

"No, I am going through with this, no matter how you try to stop me or what your answer may be."

"Well, you are keeping the poor girl waiting a long time."

"Look here, Flava, if I did not like you, if I did not love you, I should be angry."

"We must not quarrel, you know, Charlie. I should be very sorry to lose you as a friend. But let us get on with the proposal."

"Flava, you are exasperating. How do you think I can say anything the way I want to say it, with you looking on in that critical manner?"

"Do you want me to turn my back on you, dear Charles? Surely that would not be very encouraging."

"Well, I am going to talk to you anyway, whether you are serious or not."

"But you are off your knees. That will never do."

"I am not going to get down again. Surely you do not think I am a fool. I shall sit back in this chair and talk to you in a sensible manner."

"That certainly is a very off-handed way of asking for a lady's hand."

NUMEROUS PROPOSITIONS

"But should it not be done in a dignified, business-like way?"

"I can imagine myself being thus addressed: 'Dear Madam, turning a moment from the other important details of business, I beg to make you an offer, in a strictly confidential way of course, of my heart and home and my many commercial interests, including my right and title in certain properties, real and personal, regarding which we can enter into fuller discussion, if necessary.' All that would awaken a responsive chord in a woman's heart, would it not, Charlie?"

"Flava, do you know that I can stick to a point?"

"I believe you can, Charlie, or we should by this time have been talking of other things."

"Flava, I ask you, will you be my wife?"

"It is absolutely improper to let the cat out of the bag in that unceremonious way. One of us must be on his knees. If you will not kneel, I suppose I must. If the mountain will not go to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the mountain."

With these words she knelt gracefully on the carpet before Charlie.

"Oh, Flava, I cannot allow you to do that!" he exclaimed, and sprang to lift her up.

"But I was perfectly willing to allow you," returned Flava, motioning him gently away.

"Well, if you will not let me lift you up, I shall get down, too."

"This is really ever so nice," said Flava. "It reminds me of the time when I was a little girl and we used to play 'jacks.' How old are you, Charlie?"

"I am twenty-three, but please do not make any remarks."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"I suppose the proprieties will now permit us to rise. Kindly assist me."

They both arose.

"How far had we proceeded?" asked Flava.

"I had asked you an important question," said Charlie.

"Must it be answered?"

"I should like to be able to say that it must, Flava."

"Well, here is your answer."

She put both arms around him and kissed him on the cheek and on the mouth.

"The first is my kiss as a sister, to which relationship I have just been promoted. The second is prophetic of the one that will be given you by your true love, whom I can never be. Now I want you to leave me for this evening. Come and see me tomorrow afternoon. Do not be afraid. I have never kissed you before, and I never shall again, unless you persist in spoiling a nice evening in this way, and in order to vent my feelings I have either to do that or shake you."

And Charlie went forth, uncertain whether he was awake or dreaming.

When Flava was alone, she sat down to meditate. Her thoughts ran somewhat in this fashion:

"I wonder how Charlie will take his refusal when he comes to think it over. It seems so odd that he should choose this day of all days to broach the dangerous subject. He is a splendid boy, and will make some girl happy some day. I hope he does not take the matter too much to heart. I wish we could have gone on as we were for a little while longer, and then this would certainly not have happened.

NUMEROUS PROPOSITIONS

Life is full of unfortunate *contretemps*. There is the case of Mr. Woodford, for example. I feel in my very bones that something is wrong between him and Constance. What has been the matter with Constance of late? Surely she will have nothing to do with that man Charters. He certainly grates on my nerves. How I remember my first meeting with him at Lyman's! He was standing near the fire and began his conversation thus: 'What a great thing a grate is, Miss Sheldon!' How any one can so fall in love with a word is beyond ordinary comprehension. Yet perhaps it is only another application of the general principle that people fall in love with their opposites. But hark to the bell! I wonder if I am to be the person favored."

A moment afterward a servant entered. Flava glanced at the name.

"Yes, I can receive the gentleman at once. Kindly turn on the lights in the room as you go out."

"Glass-case," for it was he, entered and was graciously welcomed by Miss Sheldon. He took the chair that had been recently held by Charlie.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Glassford. It would seem as if we had almost become strangers."

"Yes, Miss Sheldon, we have not had the pleasure of meeting each other for some time. I have really had a great number of things on my mind of late."

"I hope that your serious preoccupations will not lead you finally to forget all your friends."

"Not all of them, Miss Sheldon. But truly it is very hard to keep track of the vast number of acquaintances that one makes:"

"In which class would you place your honest and

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

humble servant, this lowly person, myself, for instance?"

"I think that you cannot be serious in asking the question, Miss Sheldon. Of course I do not place you among my casual acquaintances."

"Not the least little bit casual, Mr. Glassford?"

"We have known each other such a very long time, Miss Sheldon."

"Are you reminding me in a casual way of my age?"

"Oh, no, I didn't mean to. You are not old at all."

"On what evidence, pray, do you rely, when you make the positive statement that I am not old?"

"You don't look old."

"A lady's looks may be deceiving."

"But yours are not, I am sure."

"I am very much delighted, Mr. Glassford. It relieves my mind of a great weight. I still look charming and sweet and young."

"Yes, you are all of those, Miss Sheldon. That reminds me of the errand on which I came. I am thinking seriously of getting married."

"That is very interesting news, especially to a lady's ears. Who is the fortunate person who will enter the estate of matrimony with you?"

"That is just what I came to ask you about."

"How interesting! I shall be delighted to do whatever I can for you. I shall even intercede with the fair one, if necessary."

"What would you think of me as a suitable match, to use the vulgar expression?"

"I think you would make quite a good husband, Mr. Glassford. But of course I do not pretend to

NUMEROUS PROPOSITIONS

be a judge. I should feel safer in estimating the qualifications of the young lady."

"But I am afraid you have misunderstood me, Miss Sheldon. I mean a suitable husband for yourself. You are to be the wife."

He made this extraordinary statement calmly, Flava thought almost indifferently.

"You certainly are a clever person, Mr. Glassford, in fact, positively a genius. You must be the very first man since Adam that actually proposed to a woman without her realizing it. Please pass me over that fan. Thank you. I am feeling a little better now. I shall recover the power of speech shortly."

Meanwhile "Glass-case" looked calmly on, quite as if it were somebody else's fate that was hanging in the balance. Flava thought that Roy Morris' name for the young man well expressed the transparent serenity of his demeanor.

"I do not want you to be at all perturbed, Miss Sheldon," he remarked. "That is why I have introduced the subject in this careful manner. Such occasions must always be very trying, especially as they can happen but rarely in a young lady's lifetime."

This last statement fully roused Flava.

"How do you know, Mr. Glassford," she asked, "that I do not receive proposals frequently?"

"I have thought over the list of available persons who would be likely to propose, and I have come to the conclusion that the number could not exceed seven or eight."

"And do you not think, Mr. Glassford, that if a young lady received seven or eight offers of

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

marriage it would be 'going some,' as the vulgar have it?"

"I have nothing by which to judge except my own experience, Miss Sheldon, and I should say that from eighteen to twenty young ladies have shown unmistakably that they would have accepted me if I had asked them."

"Mr. Gordon Glassford, you can sit there calmly and make that astounding statement!"

"You surely do not doubt that it is true."

"I have heard you say extraordinary things on other occasions, but I never imagined what a proposal from you would be like."

"You said a little while ago that you thought I should make quite a good husband."

"Mr. Glassford, what would you do if I fainted—fainted outright?"

"I do not know, for I am not familiar with the best treatment for fainting. Still I should try to do my utmost to bring you round. But I should be very sorry if anything happened before you answered my question as to becoming my wife."

"Well, Mr. Glassford, for fear I may say 'yes' in my delirium, I here and now say 'no.' I cannot be your wife. Allow me to sink into unconsciousness."

"You are not really fainting, Miss Sheldon?"

"I am approaching that stage. Be prepared."

"This is unexpected. You seemed to be in your usual health."

"Don't worry. I am recovering now. Pray resume your tranquil manner."

"You were inclined to answer 'no' to my suggestion, Miss Sheldon?"

NUMEROUS PROPOSITIONS

"Yes, an emphatic negative."

"But why?"

"Because—why ask a woman?"

"This is truly very unsatisfactory, Miss Sheldon."

"You are amazing, Mr. Glassford. Do you want me to say 'yes' in order to gain a respite?"

"I should be very much pleased if your answer were to be after all a favorable one."

"A woman's 'yes' is sometimes very near her 'no,' but it would not be proper to allow you to think that I shall change my mind about this."

"Very well, Miss Sheldon, now that the matter is definitely settled and out of the way, we may pass on to other interesting topics."

Flava looked at "Glass-case" steadily for some moments.

"Do you know, Mr. Glassford, it is hard for me to realize how extraordinary you are."

But her late suitor began to converse in a perfectly steady tone about various social events that had been or were to be. It was some time before Flava was sufficiently recovered from her astonishment to make any very intelligible remarks. Then she hardly knew whether to scold him for his levity and callousness or to commend him for his matchless self-control. So she decided that it would be wise to do neither.

At last the young man rose to go, and made his adieu in the most natural and easy manner in the world.

Resuming her seat after he had gone, Flava expressed herself thus:

"Well, I'd like to say something strongly participial! The modern young man has developed

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

beyond all the expectations of the philosophers. The young woman will soon have to take a special course of training, or she will find herself outplayed at her own special game. Arise, ye suffragettes! Here is a real intrusion upon our rights."

After a little while she got up, walked across the room to a secretary, unlocked it, and took out a letter. This she carefully opened. She then read over a portion slowly and softly to herself.

"You will see," it ran, "that I have made no great wealth. I have not even won local distinction. But I have kept steadily at work, and shall try to deserve these things if any of them come my way at a future time. But, to tell the truth, I am not very much concerned whether they come or do not come. There is one thing, however, that impresses itself more and more upon me. I desire to have the presence beside me of the fair lady who was once the little girl that almost came to grief along with myself on the stormy seas off Port Clearwater. Can you love me, Flava, or have you entirely forgotten your devoted cavalier of yore?"

She looked up, smiling happily. "The dear boy! How could I forget? The course of true love will be allowed to flow smoothly for him at least." She wrote across the margin, "accepted."

"I shall compose the formal document to-morrow," she said. "I have given so many refusals to-night that I am certain I should find it hard to compose a satisfactory acceptance."

CHAPTER XI.

DISCUSSIONS.

Dayton had come to have a great liking for Smith. The office of the *Earth and Mars* began to be quite familiar ground. Smith, in his turn, became a frequent visitor at the Woodford residence. Morris was another of Dayton's particular friends. With William Ellson the American was, as we already know, on terms of even greater intimacy.

Twice a week with the utmost regularity the three young men took dinner with Dayton at his home. Political, social and economic questions were discussed at much length. Smith was a good talker and had the journalist's ready fund of information. Under his guidance Dayton added rapidly to his modest knowledge of the existence of the two local political parties, Liberals and Conservatives, known popularly as Grits and Tories, respectively, and separated by more or less imaginary lines of public policy, and soon became able to debate upon Canadian and Imperial questions like a Britisher born and bred. On his side, he returned the compliment by leading Smith to form a clearer conception of United States affairs. Some of their discussions would run perhaps as follows:

"Do you not think, Mr. Smith, it would be better for this country if it cut itself loose from these European entanglements and remained simply an American power?"

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"As an American you naturally take such a view, Mr. Woodford. It has been the traditional policy of your nation to keep to your own continent. Yet even you are abandoning this attitude to a greater or less degree. But consider our case. My countrymen have always regarded themselves as closely bound to the European countries from which they or their fathers have come. If we except our French-speaking fellow-citizens, the vast majority derive their origin from the British Isles. The British element has been strong enough to absorb all the others except the French. This latter portion of the population has been within the Empire for one hundred and fifty years, or longer than the United States has been independent, and owes all its free institutions to Britain. Consequently, it is quite as loyal to the Imperial connection as the English-speaking division of the nation. Therefore, it would be as reasonable to expect Middlesex or Devonshire to break away from the Empire as to imagine that such action might be taken by the Dominion."

"If I had not been here on the spot, Mr. Smith, and thereby learned that you are right, I could hardly have believed that a state of affairs so entirely different would exist on the other side of a few lakes and a parallel of latitude."

"With conditions such as these," continued Smith, "you will see that it would be quite as hard to persuade our people to withhold their help and countenance from the Empire, as it would be to induce your nation to launch out on a great policy of imperial expansion in all the five continents. It is because the thing has been bred in the bone. Philosophers may say that such is rational or irrational, but the

DISCUSSIONS

man of affairs must deal with the conditions as he finds them."

"It is true at present," replied Dayton, "that our people do not lose much sleep over the launching of warships in the North Sea or the annexing of a province or two in the Balkans. But possibly we may be tending towards a less blissful state. The difference is that you are accepting your troubles ready made, while ours are being slowly evolved for us by this accident and that. But, Mr. Smith, I should like to hear your views as to the future of your country, should it remain a part of the Empire, as you expect. If it creates a large navy and army, will not this of necessity lead to the disappearance of the last vestige of its subordination to the London authorities?"

"I believe," said Smith, "that it is impossible for any one to form clear views as to what is likely to happen even in the near future. But there is not the slightest doubt that within a few years this country will and must have a strong navy. Such national equipment is a necessity of the world in which we live. It will cost a great sum of money. We shall make expensive mistakes, but if conditions continue as they are we are bound to reach this result. There are scarcely any remnants now left of the old dependence on Downing Street, but the few which still survive are destined to disappear. What then? We have in the Empire five self-governing nations, a whole galaxy of smaller states with varying degrees of self-government, and a huge dependency, India. As the present governmental ties steadily relax, it will be the duty of statesmen to devise new means of conducting the general affairs

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

of the Empire. Now it would seem that to each of the five nations might be assigned the duty of caring for the local interests of the Empire in its vicinity. Thus our nation would have charge of interests in America. Each portion of the Empire would keep the others fully informed as to all important matters, so that no general interests might be jeopardized by inconsiderate local action. I believe from our present experience that it will be possible to frame a plan whereby we shall be able to enjoy at one and the same time the advantages of a confederacy of allied nations and those of a union of states forming a single empire."

"From my knowledge of the way in which you make your institutions work, and conduct under feudal forms an advanced democracy," said Dayton, "I have no doubt that you can successfully evolve some such scheme. But will it not be rather puzzling to the poor foreigner? I imagine Uncle Sam's bewilderment as to whether you should be considered an American or a European power. Ought the Monroe doctrine to apply to you or ought it not, the wary old gentleman may ask himself."

Thus the discussion would go on, sometimes quite serious, sometimes lighter in tone.

Dayton was always anxious to induce Smith to talk of his personal experiences. These had been interesting. The journalist had met a host of people, every individual one of whom he appeared to remember accurately. He had travelled both in America and in Europe, but his journeyings had not been pursued in the ordinary way. For instance, he had begun the "grand tour" by shipping third class from New York to Naples. At the wharf he found a

DISCUSSIONS

student of architecture who was doing the same thing. They fell in with an agreeable crowd of Italians on the voyage, and in this way picked up a working knowledge of the language. By paying five dollars additional they got the "cabin cooking," and so fared quite sumptuously. At Naples they assumed more plutocratic airs, but again at Rome, where they decided to stay for a time, they submerged themselves in the great *vulgus*. Gradually they made their way north through Paris and London, seeing all that they could, both under and above the surface.

Smith invariably finished an account of his travels by remarking:

"I have found, Mr. Woodford, that the two great curses of humanity are big cities and war. But in the present state of our civilization we dare neither pull down our overgrown towns nor melt down our battleships."

Once he repeated, half apologetically, some verses which he had himself composed, embodying his opinions:

Home from the olden capitals,
Where famous emperors enthroned
Received their laureled generals,
Where frankly praised or light condoned
Were nameless crimes and faithless wiles:
Still seem the drops of anguish wet
Upon those grey, enormous piles,
Though rent and half in ruin set!

Home from the "glories" of the world,
The mighty cities, with their gloom
Of smoke through which on high unfurled
Grandly the gilded banners loom

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Of Mammon's armies, and the shout
Of those who win, the frenzied shriek
Of those who fail ring ever out,
For fierce the strong prey on the weak!

Home from the drill-ground and the fort,
Where train the legions' countless lines!
Home from the dockyard and the port,
Where skilful rear the dread designs
Of vast monsters swallowing up,
(As in some tale of ancient years
Dragons of flame would drain a cup),
Draughts of a nation's sweat and tears!

William Ellson was an enthusiastic advocate of agricultural education. Having the ability to express his views in an interesting and cogent manner, he was often encouraged by his friends to talk upon the subject, although the discussion was usually somewhat one-sided because of lack of knowledge on their part.

"Well, Roy," he began on one occasion, "I have known you ever since we got into that lively altercation behind the Collegiate building and were interrupted by the principal, who asked us to transcribe in Latin the account of the prize fight in the fifth book of the *Æneid* and then to write a translation of the same in English. How we toiled over that murderous description and promised at the close that the 'regrettable incident would not be repeated,' submissively using the classic English of our instructor! As I say, I have known you intimately since that trying occasion, and I have always found that you take a special delight in starting me off upon my hobbies. Yet I must admit that you are a patient listener in spite of your tendency toward satirical remarks at the close."

DISCUSSIONS

"Nevertheless," returned Morris, "I have been usually sparing of my observations out of a feeling of tenderness for William the Talkative. For Mr. Woodford's information I must explain that the name was bestowed by our teacher in history after a period of sorrowful meditation as to what an ideal pupil a William the Silent would be."

"I wonder where 'Tommy' is now," said William. "With what delight we used to hear him employ his favorite expressions when opening the day's lesson! 'Ladies and gentlemen, you will now take your pews. "At this moment France was the dominant power in Christendom." Explain that statement, Morris.' Then amid breathless suspense Roy would unfold before our eyes the whole panorama of continental politics. At the end 'Tommy' would remark: 'You have heard Morris' answer. I hope you will all profit by it.' We were called upon to 'profit' by everything uttered during the lesson."

"It is wonderful how amusing all those things seemed to us," remarked Morris. "The very memory of them now gives me an internal kink. We had a pretty good time, and I only hope that 'Tommy' enjoyed it as much as we. I have sometimes thought by a certain twinkle in his eye that he was far from taking too grave a view of the situation. But we are depriving ourselves of the pleasure of hearing a few well-chosen words from the speaker of the evening."

"You will remember, Roy, that 'Tommy' was accustomed to say that I was usually silent until I began to talk, thereby intimating in his inimitable way that I was habitually a taciturn youth, speaking freely, however, upon certain occasions. So if you

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

are willing to listen to me, I am willing to commence . . . I am of opinion that the time is coming in this province when the majority of those engaged in agricultural pursuits will have had a proper technical training in an agricultural school. The advantages of such a preparation for their work are becoming more and more apparent. But there is one point that I should like to emphasize. I am not in favor of producing in our country a race of instructed barbarians, men who are thoroughly trained in the technical business of their calling, but are entirely without what is meant by the much abused word 'culture.' It may be safe under a more or less autocratic system of government to train the hand and the intelligence without troubling much about the higher intellect and the soul, but it is dangerous in a democracy. A country largely given over to materialism is in reality a semi-savage state, not a civilized one. The government of such a country, if it depends upon the will of its barbarian element, however skilful this may be in manufacture or in agriculture, is likely to be of a deplorable kind.

"The Germans, as I have read somewhere, consider that the spot where civilization has reached its highest development is a certain portion of their territory. Now I am not going to dispute this claim except in so far as to say that, if one admits it, he ceases to regard as of first importance some things for which Anglo-Saxons would be willing to fight and die. On the other hand, I should like it to be justly said some day that the place on this continent where civilization exists in its most nearly perfect form is in my native province. But we have an immense amount of labor to perform before we

DISCUSSIONS

can hope to attain to such an enviable position. As many as possible of our people will need to be trained to make the fullest and noblest use of their bodies and minds. They must not neglect the material side of living, but should by no means allow their energies to be wholly absorbed by it.

"Our agricultural college is unfortunately at a distance from the arts department of the provincial university with which it is connected. Now, as agricultural education becomes more general, there will be in attendance an increasing number of students who would be attracted towards a longer or shorter course in subjects outside of those strictly required for their calling, if the opportunities were to be found at hand. To be mentioned also is the benefit for all students of association with persons pursuing other courses than those of a specialized college. It would seem advisable, therefore, that our province should establish a college of arts in connection with its agricultural school. Through such means would be avoided many of the dangers that might arise from the training of the intelligence apart from the wholesome influence of a broad general culture. Thus we should be in less peril of setting up a blatant commercialism as our national aim.

"In the constitution of such a college great care would need to be exercised. For instance, we should not desire upon the teaching staff many of those who had taken merely a narrow, specialized training unfitting them for the work that is really required in an arts college. For an institution of the kind suggested we should require professors who had received a wider elementary education than is usual with us and who were showing capabilities of doing

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

genuine work. Under them would come instructors who had been teachers and were specially distinguished for their power of imparting knowledge. In the college thus established it would not be possible for any student to remain long without receiving benefit both through the inspiration derived from the great scholars and through the more direct instruction given by the ordinary members of the staff. It may be possible for large universities to carry quite a cargo of 'dead timber' labelled with more or less pretentious degrees, but such would be disastrous for the college I should like to see founded. Whenever I notice that the teaching staff of some little back-country university is composed largely of persons with a particular kind of degree, I am reminded of the famous regiment in which there were no privates, for they were all 'colonels.'

One evening Dayton happened to ask Smith how sufficient news could be provided to justify the inclusion of the name of our brother planet in the title of his paper.

"We have not yet been able to establish wireless communication with Mars," replied Smith. "But we have recently installed a special interplanetary signal service which is not giving bad results. If you will look at our last issue (I find I have a copy here with me), you will gain some idea of our enterprise in this respect."

Smith passed the paper over to Dayton, whose eye caught the following: Martian Despatches. These were read aloud at the request of the company, and ran thus:—

DISCUSSIONS

(By Special Interplanetary Service.)

Professor Baldonthetopoftheheadicus of the Observatorium Goldecuriosum has just published his records of observations upon our neighboring planet, the Earth. He notes that some time ago he perceived various parties of men evidently in a hurry to arrive at the northern apex of the planetary axis. During his observations he fell asleep, and when he awoke he noticed the last of these parties going back. He is doubtful whether any reached the particular point, but he hopes that if he can secure an answer to his wireless messages, he will learn the truth, as the inhabitants of the Earth must know.

The former president of the Martian Republic has just returned from an electrocuting trip in the Green Grass Latitudes. He brings back ten boneless cod and five talking oysters, and speaks highly of the newly invented apparatus for the production of a sufficient supply of electric power by the movement of the legs in walking or running.

D. T. was seen last Sunday evening in the vicinity of the corner of the fifth meridian west and the fifteenth latitude south. What were you doing over there, Dan?"

Signor Simeon Skylights, who has stood on a pillar in Irrigation District XXX, township twelve, range eight west of the fourth meridian, for about

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

fifty years, has decided to come down. It will be remembered that S. S. S. had a theory that the motionless figures seen on the Earth in the open spaces of cities and elsewhere, are real men who pose themselves thus to represent ideal loveliness. The usual theory is that these figures are of metal or stone. It is evident that Sig. Skylights either has changed his views or has concluded that his seraphic beauty has begun to wane.

A break has occurred in the main shaft in pumping station quadruple zero, and as a result the supply of antarctic water has been cut off from the whole section of the planet along the ninth meridian. The president is investigating. A suspicion of graft has always been entertained respecting the installation of this particular plant.

It is needless to say that these veracious items of news were much enjoyed by Smith's friends.

CHAPTER XII.

MURIEL.

"DESTINY was coming to Charlie Stringer on swift wings." The preceding sentence has been borrowed from a romance which the author read in his extreme youth. Happily it has remained in the lumber-room of his memory to be available for use in describing how fate had at last begun to take Charlie in hand and to deal with him in a final and effective manner.

There had grown up in Royaltown, on the ragged edge of poverty, a little girl who inherited from a far-off ancestor characteristics which were conspicuously absent from both her parents. For instance, her father constantly spoke of the necessity of "not being backward in coming forward," but he had none the less remained remarkably backward in everything but the ability to conduct endless discussions on commonplace subjects without real knowledge or power of argument. Another of his favorite maxims was that "a man could never become rich with his coat off." But he, poor fellow, had tried the process of accumulating wealth both with his coat on and with it off, the results in the two cases proving to be identical. In the end his coat remained off, for he "accepted" a permanent position as handler of a truck in the R. R. R. freight sheds. Her mother belonged to that interesting type which endeavors to have its washing out the

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

earliest of all the community on Monday morning, and devotes the rest of the week to boasting of its pre-eminence in the laundry Marathon.

Reared amid such surroundings, little Muriel Brown had to take an exceedingly practical view of life. There were other young members of the family besides herself who had to be fed, hatted, habited and shod. The great corporation of the R. R. R. did not lessen the chances of handsome dividends by extreme generosity to its employees. So at an early age Muriel came to understand that, if she was to be suitably dressed, she would have to learn the arts connected with the making of her own garments. As a matter of fact she became quite skilful, and thus was able to present a highly creditable appearance at marvellously small expense. Moreover, she developed into a young lady of striking appearance, with more than the ordinary share of good looks. Her manner was energetic yet restrained. She had none of the usual characteristics of "self-madeness." Having determined to continue at school until she should receive a teacher's diploma, she was faced by more than one small crisis in her financial affairs. But she had a brave little heart, and met the uncertainties of the future with a smile upon her face.

Muriel was very faithful to her friends, and gave them help in quite original ways. On one occasion she was accompanied home from the evening meeting of the Collegiate Literary Society by Frederick Willis, who was admitted to be the handsomest boy in the class, and had developed remarkable tendencies as a juvenile flirt. She gave him just the slightest encouragement (he did not need much),

and he kissed her delightedly. Then she deliberately dealt him such a blow on the face as made him see several constellations. Angrily he exclaimed, "Why did you do that, Muriel?"

"I did it because you are the meanest boy living. You have got my best friend, Sadie Moore, in love with you, and now you are telling around that you can kiss her whenever you like. If I were a boy, and liked to kiss girls as much as you do, I should have the gumption to keep the secret to myself. You may tell as many people as you please that you kissed me, and that you received a thoroughly good slap and a piece of my mind at the same time."

Frederick, though somewhat spoiled by his easy successes, was not without gentlemanly qualities, and straightway begged her pardon, and said that he would never tell on a girl again. They ever afterward were excellent friends. If Frederick kissed any more girls, and it is naturally to be suspected that he did, he left the duty of informing the public wholly to the chance observer or the young lady concerned.

It must not be supposed that Muriel was entirely a model student at the Collegiate Institute. It is true that she studied hard, yet she was always ready to take part in any fun that was going forward. And sometimes there was much. One of the women teachers, Miss Lane, had some difficulty in keeping her classes under proper control. It was not that discipline was in danger of entire subversion, but there was what might be called a guerilla warfare which manifested itself in a slight unruliness, a tendency to pranks, and a general disregard of the

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

stricter school proprieties. One youth particularly, Adolphus Starr by name, was a permanent centre of good-humored disaffection. Occasionally Muriel would be deeply involved as well. Personally Miss Lane was very much liked, and it was only on account of the pupils' loyalty to her that more serious trouble had not arisen.

One day there had been a little more disturbance than usual, and Adolphus and Muriel had been among those who were asked to remain after school as a punishment. Miss Lane endeavored to make a strong appeal to Adolphus that he mend his ways. At last, intending to have him enter into some kind of agreement with her to be a better behaved boy in future, she said, "Now, Adolphus, I am going to propose ——"

"Oh, this is so sudden, Miss Lane; this is so sudden!" And the young villain feigned the most rapturous surprise.

The situation was quite too much for everybody's gravity, including Miss Lane's. All the culprits got off without further difficulty, as the result of the boy's clever ruse.

On a later occasion, Muriel went to the teachers' room after school hours, expecting to find the principal there. She knocked, and Miss Lane's voice invited her to enter. Learning that the principal had left the building, she was about to go away with a few courteous words, when she noticed unmistakable traces of tears in the teacher's eyes. Instantly she rushed over and threw her arms round the young woman's neck.

"You have been crying, Miss Lane, have you not?" she exclaimed. "Can I help you?"

MURIEL

The teacher could restrain herself no longer, and began to weep in earnest. Then, recovering herself quickly, she told Muriel of her troubles in school and how they oppressed her. She spoke of the long struggle with poverty, due to her father's illness and death, through which she had come until she obtained her present position. But if matters did not go better, she was afraid that she should not be able to hold it for long.

A story so closely parallel to what her own might be had a tremendous effect on Muriel. She comforted Miss Lane with the assurance of the full devotion of herself and comrades. "We have been very thoughtless and unkind to you," she said, "but we will be so no more. We all like and esteem you ever so much."

The pressure of the strong young arms and the kind words were very soothing to the teacher's depressed spirit. Afterwards she and Muriel walked home together, chatting gaily, as if neither had a care in the world.

Next morning Muriel sought out Adolphus, with whom she was always on the best of terms. She told him in confidence something of what she had learned, and asked his co-operation.

"Muriel, you know we are good friends," he said, "and I'll be as meek as Moses, if you want me to be. I am really not very bad, but I seem somehow to keep things going. I like Miss Lane splendidly, and I don't really want to give her any trouble. I suppose the other fellows will be fairly good, if a couple of us set the example."

So the petty irritations at once ceased in the class. The next day was a truly delightful one for the half-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

discouraged teacher. She quickly gained a definite power of control, and came to be regarded as one of the most efficient instructors on the staff. Muriel thus won a warm friend, and spent afterwards many a charming hour in her teacher's rooms. This was her first great step upward. She learned from Miss Lane many of the little refinements of life that would otherwise have remained quite unknown to her and the ignorance of which would have exerted a subtle influence upon her outward demeanor.

From this period dated Muriel's unchallenged position as the leading young lady of the school. On all occasions when it was necessary that one girl should take charge, the others instinctively turned to her. She even became president of the literary society, being the first of her sex to attain to that exalted position. Then came the days of the great trial, which for long left memories in the school. There is an historic picture of the scene hanging in the front hall. Judge, jury, prisoner, and counsel, everybody is there. The sessions of the trial occupied intermissions and half-hours after school for a full week. The prisoner was charged with stealing rhubarb from a neighboring garden and feloniously consuming the same. Muriel was counsel for the defence, Adolphus for the prosecution. On a copy of the Canadian History the witnesses were sworn "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Great was the excitement when the principal was put on the stand. As a result of skilful cross-questioning, it seemed at one time as if he might be held as accessory to the crime. In the end, through Muriel's masterly summing-up of the case for the defence, the prisoner was acquitted.

MURIEL

Just about this time Fate pressed an electric button, and in consequence Charlie Stringer took notice of Muriel and Muriel took notice of Charlie. The young man, who was well acquainted with Miss Lane, was calling upon her one evening.

"Who was that rather long-limbed youthful beauty I saw with you yesterday?" asked Charlie, who was a little satirical since Flava had definitely refused his suit. The sun seemed yet to shine with scarcely its accustomed brightness, and the moon was under a cloud.

"Hush! Mr. Stringer, that is one of my best friends. You should not speak so disrespectfully."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lane. I did not know she was one of your particular friends, or I should not have made the remark. Of course, on general principles I ought not to have spoken in that way at all. But I should really like to know who she is. I have not seen her very often. I suppose she must live in the other part of the town."

"Yes, she lives at some distance from here. Do you really wish to know who she is?"

"Yes, I do, Miss Lane. Do not think of punishing me by refusing to tell."

"Are you sincerely penitent, Mr. Stringer?"

"Truly, Miss Lane, I am."

"Very well, she is Miss Muriel Brown, who is the dearest and truest friend I have in Royaltown."

"I should like very much to meet her."

"You will, of course, be on your very best behavior. Realize that I have not quite forgiven you yet."

"I shall be propriety personified, and shall take special lessons beforehand. Russ will give me instruction."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"I am not sure that you will improve much under Mr. Russell's tuition."

"Oh, Russ is fine! He has the most dignified manners when he likes to assume them."

"If you and Mr. Russell will come over to-morrow evening, I shall try to arrange to have Muriel here, though she has many duties to perform at home, and as a consequence she hardly ever gets out. She is bright and original, and I am confident that you both will like her."

Therefore, next day at school Miss Lane had a little talk with Muriel. The matter was easily arranged, for Muriel said she was sure her mother would be willing that such a kind invitation should be accepted.

Thus Muriel made her modest little bow to society. It was certainly quite an informal way of "coming out." How she enjoyed the whole of that evening! It was so strange to feel that she was a school girl no longer, but a real young lady, and to find herself treated so deferentially by two fashionably-garbed young gentlemen with such agreeable manners. What a truly jolly time they had together, and how well acquainted everybody was when it was all over! Mr. Stringer asked to be allowed to accompany her home, and Mr. Russell spoke in the politest manner of his own solitary journey to the bank. Then they wanted him to come, too. But no, two were company, three were a crowd. Russell would, like the English statesman, plough his own lonely furrow. Then everybody expressed profound sympathy for him. How they chattered, and pretended to weep, and then laughed, as only youth can!

MURIEL

Then the long delightful walk home with the nicest young man she had ever known! Fate, are you going to interfere, settling this matter at once and not allowing it to drag through a volume of five hundred and some odd pages? Why are those young people swinging hands, as they pass down a deserted street, where the rays of the moon cannot pierce the shadows beneath the trees? Charlie is one of those youths supposed to be rare in the land, who do not on ordinary occasions hold the hands or kiss the faces of young ladies. Shall we commit a great indiscretion and listen to their conversation, as they stand for a moment at the gate one week later?

"I can hardly believe it all to be true," says Muriel.

"Yes, it is true. We shall always love each other," replies Charlie.

"I seem to have known you all my life, and yet I met you for the first time only a few days ago," says Muriel.

"We have known each other since the dawn of eternity," says Charlie, full of a wild rhapsody.

"We shall meet again soon, shall we not?" says the practical Muriel.

"Yes, I'll be over to-morrow evening, Muriel."

"I shall be ever so delighted to see you, Charlie."

A short time afterward Charlie was calling on Flava.

"Mr. Stringer, I have been noticing a very new moon in the sky of late," remarked the lady.

"That is strange, Miss Sheldon. I thought last night that the moon was getting full. I don't mean any disrespect to the satellite."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Oh, this kind of moon does not develop into a full moon. It becomes a honeymoon or else in due time disappears from the sky forever."

"Really, Miss Sheldon, I must be growing dull, in fact, quite obtuse. I must have Russ sharpen me up."

"Mr. Stringer, look me straight in the eye. Can you repeat what you have just said, and then say 'honest Injun' after it?"

"No, I can't, Miss Sheldon. I own up."

"You are flirting?"

"Worse than that."

"You are in love?"

"Worse than that."

"You are engaged?" Flava spoke incredulously.

"You have guessed it."

"That is bad enough. But I began to be afraid it was still worse, and that we already had you married on our hands."

"Well, I am going to be." Charlie's voice implied determined resistance to the world's possible protest.

"You need not be so tragical about it, Mr. Stringer. After all, it is no crime. Still, youth proposes and then changes its mind."

"Not this chicken! if I may be permitted one of the expressions Russ uses when he discards his expurgated vocabulary."

"Is the matter definitely settled?"

"Yes, definitely and finally arranged. We shall wait only till I secure my promotion in six months."

"Mr. Charles Stringer, you certainly are making a record for yourself. May I have the honor

MURIEL

of meeting the lady? I am going to have a special interest in her."

"Why, of course, Miss Sheldon. I shall be delighted to have you meet her."

"Who is she and where is she to be found? I have no knowledge beyond the hints that a little bird dropped before it took to its wings and flew away."

Charlie gave the desired information.

Next day Flava determined to make her own opportunity. She ordered her motor-car, and was driven to the Collegiate building shortly before the close of the afternoon session. On arriving there, she went at once to the office of the principal, who happened to be in. They were friends of long standing, Flava having been a former pupil of his. They greeted each other cordially.

"What a business-like look the old place has!" remarked Flava. "All this furniture has been put in since I was here last."

"Yes, the school is much changed both outwardly and inwardly since the time when you were in attendance, Flava!"

"There is a young girl here I should like to meet, Miss Muriel Brown."

"Yes, she is in the senior form. School will be out in a moment. I came just now to give the signals for dismissal. I shall ask her to come in."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Slater. You are exceedingly kind to take the trouble."

"Such a little service is not worth mentioning, Flava."

The principal touched various buttons, and the result was soon apparent in the rapid filling of the corridors with eager, happy young people. There-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

upon he went out, and almost immediately afterward returned with Muriel. He introduced the girl, who was much surprised to find that this beautiful lady, in her lovely stylish attire, wished to speak with her.

When Mr. Slater had left to attend to the many duties devolving upon him at the close of the day's work, Flava said, "I am a friend of a friend of yours, Mr. Stringer." Muriel blushed. "I want to become acquainted with you. Be so good as to excuse me for coming in this unceremonious way to find you. But I feel that we must be friends at once, and not wait a moment longer. Do you think that you will like me, Muriel?"

"Oh, Miss Sheldon, it is very kind of you to wish to be my friend. I am sure I shall like you, if you think it worth while to have my friendship."

"I do think it very much worth while. I want you to call me Flava. We must not be formal at all. My car is waiting below. We shall go down to it."

Muriel got books and wraps and accompanied Flava to the motor. They drove immediately to Muriel's home, where Flava was introduced to Mrs. Brown, and received that lady's excited permission that her daughter should have dinner and spend the evening with this new friend.

Muriel felt as if she were in a dream when she was taken up to Flava's beautiful rooms.

"You must know, Muriel, that I am a thoroughly spoiled mortal. I have everything I want to have. I am the only child of this stately mansion, and the Sheldon hundreds, thousands or millions, I am not certain of the amount, will probably be mine some day."

Muriel answered this by expressing her confidence in the goodness of her friend. Then they made ready for dinner. Flava took Muriel down to the dining-room and seated the young girl opposite to herself.

"We are going to dine in solemn and lonely state this evening. Father and mother are both abroad for the occasion, eating elsewhere. But no doubt we shall be very successful alone."

Muriel never forgot what she thought was the superlative magnificence of that repast. A maid, bringing some wonderful special dish, proved to be the daughter of her mother's next door neighbor, and whispered in her ear, when Flava happened to be for the moment turned away, "It's lots of fun waiting on you, Muriel. But I'm dying to know how you got here."

After dinner was over, Flava took her to another room, which to Muriel's mind quite surpassed any that she had seen yet. It was in fact Flava's favorite place for receiving her visitors, and is familiar to us as the scene of Charlie's and Glassford's discomfiture.

"Now, Muriel," she said, as they seated themselves, "a young lady, according to the modern type of romance, should on an occasion like this place a cigarette between her ruby lips and offer the weed in this mild form also to her friends. But, fortunately, I am not as yet in a book, and neither my friends nor I smoke in real life. So you will be spared the charming picture. Are you addicted to the modern novel, Muriel?"

Muriel said that she was so busy that she could

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

not find time to read much but what was directly included in her course in literature at school.

"That is right, Muriel, touch not, taste not, handle not. I have been destroying my intellect by the perusal of that golden-colored abomination on the table yonder. The hero kisses all the ladies, high or low, who have any claims to good looks and can be found alone. Such action seems to be regarded as simply a mildly exaggerated form of compliment. There are indications that the heroine would like to do similarly, but the sex is not sufficiently enfranchised to make such conduct possible, even in a story. But she swears adorably. Certainly the modern novel is a thing of horror to be forgotten forever. Why do I read it, you may ask. Truly, why? Wherefore do I sometimes elevate my waist-line to my neck, and then suddenly take the fancy to depress it to my ankles? Somebody starts the habit, and we all fall in line. Surely we are a feeble and obedient sex."

All at once she changed the subject. "Muriel, I know your little secret. I extracted it by careful questioning from Charlie. It was none of his fault that the matter was found out. Now I want to be fair, and tell you mine. I am engaged to be married also. The other person is the dearest and loveliest man you ever saw, save in your eyes Charlie, of course. This is his photograph." She took it out of the secretary. "Is he not charming? We had some extremely romantic experiences together in the days of our early youth."

Muriel liked the appearance of the manly face.

"He is just as good as he is handsome," Flava went on to say. "Now let us kiss each other in

MURIEL

memory of our lovers. It is strange what a satisfied feeling a woman has, when she is definitely tagged to a man."

Just then Miss Lyman was announced, and Constance came in looking a little pale, but even more beautiful than ever.

"Oh, Constance," Flava exclaimed, "how glad I am to see you! How is your mother?"

"She is now improving steadily, and in fact is thinking of getting up to-morrow. She was worse injured than was thought to be the case at first. But all the time she has been cheerful, and has never complained, even though she has suffered much pain."

"I am delighted to hear that she is now really convalescent. I have been so sorry for her all through the trying period since the accident." Then, thinking of her companion, she added, "Pardon me, I have forgotten to make you acquainted with Miss Muriel Brown."

Constance smiled kindly. "I feel as if I ought to know you, Muriel. I have often seen you pass our house on your way to school. Some one told me who you were, and what an excellent pupil you were at the Collegiate. I believe, now, it was Miss Lane."

"Miss Lane has been a very kind friend to me, Miss Lyman. But for her I should have found work at school much harder."

"Yes, Miss Lane is a person who never hesitates to help any one, no matter what may be the cost to herself. She is a very dear friend of mine. I must ask you to come over to see me. Flava should not be the only one favored."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"I shall, indeed, be delighted to call on you, Miss Lyman. I have so often heard Miss Lane speak of you."

"That will be very kind, Muriel. My mother will be glad to see a bright young visitor like you."

Fresh arrivals were now announced in the persons of Lotta Ellson and Estelle Morris.

"Why, girls, this is delightful," said Flava, welcoming them. "I have not seen either of you for ever so many months of Sundays."

"We have just dropped in for a moment," said Lotta, "by way of a friendly chat, as an old neighbor woman says when she calls on mother. Why, Muriel, I am more than pleased to see you. I have been absent from school two whole days. I am afraid I shall be in Mr. Slater's black books."

When the first greetings were over, Flava asked Miss Morris when her brother intended leaving for the university.

"He leaves next week," was the reply. "What a host of letters he has been receiving about the prospects of the Rugby season! He is outside just now, seeing that the car does not run away and expecting us back in five minutes."

"We must have him come in," said Flava, and rang for a maid, to whom she gave orders to send one of the servants to the relief of Mr. Morris.

After the first few minutes of general conversation that followed Morris' entrance, the company separated into two unequal divisions. Flava and Constance talked in a somewhat intimate tone to each other. Morris and the younger girls discussed gaily some topics of interest. He had met Muriel before, and liked her because of her cheerful and energetic

nature. The conversation soon fell upon some fun that had been recently had at the Collegiate. The young man told of some of the good things that had happened in the earlier days when he attended.

When the conversation became once more general, somebody suggested an expedition to the caves on Royal Mountain before Morris left for the university. The leaves were just beginning to turn, and the view would be magnificent. The company ought not to be too large, so that all might go together in one big van. So there was a great struggle over the list, but it was finally completed. Miss Pauline Grandis was upon it, as also Mr. Charters. Constance said that she would not go, for she did not like at present to leave her mother for so long. There was much regret at the necessity for her absence. Dayton and William were, of course, among the favored ones.

"I suppose you know," said Morris, "that Mr. Woodford is now with the legal firm of Allan, Fraser, Fraser and Allan. He has decided to stay in Royal-town, but he will not be officially admitted to the bar of the province until he has gone through some formalities. His private office is very comfortable, has a door opening from a side street, and is a convenient place to slip into when you are down town and have nothing serious on your hands. The *Earth and Mars* is partly edited there, when no more weighty matter is going forward. Mr. Smith and Mr. Woodford have argued the American tariff to tatters. Mr. Smith put an article in his paper to which Mr. Woodford found grave objection. Mr. Smith admitted he was wrong, and then wrote another article in which he set himself right, but did it so cleverly that if you

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

read over the two articles together, you would not think they were inconsistent with each other. I must say that if Smith goes on progressing in this way, he will some day be the Right Honorable Sir James P. W. Smith, K.C.M.G., Prime Minister of Canada. But I have given up reading the *Earth and Mars* of late, for I generally know what is coming out in it, and I am reading the *Polar Star* instead, although its politics do not agree with me."

Most of the details of the proposed outing being now settled, the company dispersed. Morris took Muriel round to her home, before turning the car's head from the city to the long, straight road that led to the Ellson farm.

CHAPTER XII.

ROYAL MOUNTAIN.

THE date set for the outing came. It proved to be one of those days which are the very earliest prelude to that mysterious division of the year called in eastern North America, "Indian Summer." This season is most conveniently considered as not having any fixed period, but as being a series of soft, hazy days, interrupted by more or less lengthy intervals of frosty or cloudy weather. Perhaps in the olden time, as our fathers tell us, before the hand of man had destroyed the forests, it was possible to select some particular portion of the autumn and say this is Indian Summer; but it is rare that one can do so now.

The brilliance of the early September sun had passed, and it shone now with a milder glow. In the Royaltown parks the leaves were fluttering down, and were being swept together into heaps by the gardeners. Flower-beds were being dismantled. Everything was eloquent of the coming of a more rigorous season.

"This is a delightful day," said Flava. "We could not have hoped for one more beautiful."

"How strangely lovely and entrancingly glorious it is!" exclaimed Estelle Morris.

"I am glad I came," said Charlie, sitting next to Muriel.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"This is exactly like what I read about in the very sweetest story that was lent me last week," said Miss Pauline Grandis, who was in close proximity to Dayton.

"It is a great day," said Mr. Charters, who had taken a seat with the driver.

Drawn by a team of strong, active horses, the large van swung round the last street-corner and out upon the broad road that was the main artery to the north. Over the long steel bridge it rattled, while the more excitable members of the party tossed apples and bananas to the urchins playing about in the water far below. Past the creameries it sped, where the white-suited workers waved merry signals. Past great fertile fields it rolled, where ploughmen stopped to gaze, or where the boys and girls picking potatoes laughed and swung about their heads the buckets which they were filling. Past the little red brick school-house on the hill it swept, where the academic calm was much disturbed by the gay voices of the merrymakers. On and ever on, gradually climbing the terraces, which were once the beaches of ancient lakes. Then suddenly comes a bend in the highway, which here begins its curve westward round the mountain. The driver does not follow it, but chooses a less frequented route that steadily ascends, the road swinging this way and that in a sort of rough flattened spiral. At last he comes to a steep part. The gentlemen are to alight, but the ladies may remain in the vehicle. Charlie, William and Morris run races. Dayton amuses himself by cultivating the acquaintance of Charters. Glass-case serenely closes the procession. Finally the steepest portion of the ascent is passed. Everybody climbs in and talks in

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

various tones about the view. All Royaltown is visible far below them. Beyond to the horizon is the vast blue mirror of the lake.

"I see the top of the bank building out there in the rhubarbs," says Charlie. "I wonder how Russ likes dealing out the shekels in my place to-day?"

"There's the 'Laconic' just leaving the wharf," remarks Morris.

"Do you see the flags on the buildings? I do not believe that Mr. Woodford can take his eyes off Old Glory above the American consul's office," said Lotta, mischievously.

"I should have to rely on my very fine patriotic sense to recognize the emblem at this distance, if I did not know exactly where it is," replied Dayton.

But soon they came to a gate. A boy was seen running towards them. The gate was opened by him. They drove on to a house, where a motherly lady welcomed them. She proved to be an ideal hostess, for she was in the habit of treating all her chance visitors as if they were her personal friends. Everybody fell in love with her at sight. All the necessary equipment, such as rougher clothing and heavier shoes for the girls, was now brought into the house. While these were being donned, the men outside talked with the guide, who had meanwhile come up. They learned that there was quite an extensive series of natural galleries running into the mountain in various directions, but most of these were small or impassable. Among them were only two or three that possessed interest. But the general effect of the tumbled mass of rocks amid the otherwise quiet landscape was particularly striking.

Soon the girls came forth garbed and booted for

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

rough adventure. Lotta looked truly bewitching in her mountaineer's costume, and must have played havoc with the pulsations of Roy Morris' heart. Dayton could not forbear complimenting her, when he happened for a moment to be standing beside her and apart from the others.

"My little Canadian sister must resemble the beautiful fairy of this mountain," he said.

"It is strange that my tall American brother has learned to flatter since he came to our Arcadian country."

"There is no flattery, but only truth spoken in Arcadia, Lotta."

"May I tell you a secret, Dayton?"

"Have I to keep it?"

"Yes, always."

"Very well, Lotta, please tell me it."

"Pauline has some plan for to-day, and it concerns you."

"That is mysterious. Do you know anything more?"

"No, Dayton, I do not."

"How do you know as much as that?"

"I don't know it, I feel it. If I really knew, probably I should not tell you."

"You are a member of a wonderful sex. I shall keep my weather eye open in the direction of our Amazonian friend."

"I wish the sex hadn't so much curiosity. I should dearly like to know what happens, but it wouldn't be nice to have you tell me. I suppose the fault comes from Eve. But we must stop whispering now and be a well-behaved brother and sister."

They immediately joined the general group, which

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

was gathered round the guide and engaged in asking him every kind of relevant and irrelevant question.

Finally, when everything and everybody were ready, the last ascent was begun. A path led from the house towards the back of the farm, but after a short distance turned abruptly up a tree-covered slope and was soon in the region of the rocks. It would be idle for us to attempt to follow the company in its meanderings through the galleries, which sometimes were open to the sky above, sometimes were partly roofed over by fallen rocks, and again were for portions of their course quite within the flanks of the mountain. At last they were pretty well tired, and sat down in picturesque attitudes on rock, tree trunk or bed of leaves. During all this time, Mr. Charters had kept steadily by Miss Pauline's side. Whenever Dayton happened to approach the couple, a succession of "greats" would burst upon his ear. He realized that Mr. Charters was undoubtedly in his best social form. Once he wondered whether Mr. Charters would use his favorite adjective if the Amazonian foot were by any accident to become the topic of conversation. Certainly thus far there had been no need for Dayton to adopt precautions against anything that might be coming from that quarter of the compass. But it was rather disquieting that, when the party sat down, he found Pauline close beside him on the same tree-trunk, and he could not tell just how she had come to be there. He caught Lotta's eye observing them, but instantly it was turned away.

A conversation necessarily arose.

"Are you tired, Miss Grandis?"

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"No, not at all, but I do not see much fun in tumbling about among these rocks. When you have done it once, it is all the same old thing."

"You are not very enthusiastic over the natural beauties of the place."

"Yes, I like it all right, but I want a little more variety. I love the sea-shore and old ocean, you know. I hope mamma will allow me to go there next year."

But by this time the party had pretty well recovered. The guide mentioned that there was always some snow in a certain cave. It drifted in during the winter, and scarcely ever melted. He would, with the help of two of the gentlemen, bring some out, and all could engage in a snowball contest. But he did not mention that a sufficient supply of snow was carefully put away every winter to make sure that there would be enough for all the visitors who might come the succeeding summer.

Charlie and Morris followed the guide into the icy darkness, and soon came forth with armfuls of snow. Great was the jubilation. All the dignity of "grown-ups" vanished. Battle was joined in earnest. Even Mr. Charters felt the infection of the occasion, and, with the exclamation "This is great!" scattered some handfuls over Pauline. But the Amazon, not considering him a fair match for her prowess, cast only a few grainy particles upon him and devoted her attention to Dayton and William. Soon, however, peace was proclaimed, and everybody's dignity began slowly to return. With much laughter the snow was removed from clothes and hair.

"This has been tremendously jolly," exclaimed

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

Charlie. "I haven't had so much fun since I was down with the measles."

"Roy Morris, I have a bone to pick with you," cried Flava. "I believe some of the snow you threw at me has gone down my neck."

"Flava, be thankful," returned Roy. "Snow always melts and does not permanently inconvenience one by remaining in a lump."

"Dayton," said Lotta, standing beside him, "I tried my best to hit you with a snowball, but, being a girl, I struck the rocks instead. I believe you purposely spared me, which was very polite of you, but was not in the game."

They now followed the guide as he led them down out of the region of rocks by a way different from the one by which they had entered. In a few minutes they came out upon a beautiful natural lawn from which the ground sloped away so rapidly that the great plain seemed to be directly below. A table was charmingly, though not elaborately, spread, and the hostess, assisted by two girls, evidently her daughters, was busy about it. A large fire had been built at a little distance off "to complete the rustic effect," as Morris remarked. The little boy was exerting his energies in keeping it up, and seeing that culinary operations were going forward according to the primitive practice of our forefathers.

"A leap back into the dark ages," said Glass-case, "but one that promises very satisfactory fare."

"You are scandalously careless with your metaphors, old man," said Morris.

"It is only mid-afternoon," exclaimed Charlie, "and I am hungry enough to chew the juicy side of a door-mat. I have Eskimo cravings for all kinds

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

of delicacies since my brief excursion into the arctic zone."

"I fancy dinner is quite ready," said the guide. "Will you take it as you are, or shall we go down to the house first?"

"Oh, as we are, as we are!" cried everybody. "This is a picnic of the good old time."

Close by there was a spring, in whose crystal waters mudstains were removed amid much splashing and merriment.

At table the company insisted that the motherly old lady should sit down and occupy the place of honor. The two girls and the guide acted in the capacity of waiters. All the choicest delicacies of rural life were set before the visitors.

"This is milk," said Charlie, "and not the delectable compound of soapsuds and laundry blue that is my habitual beverage. And this cream! Why, Muriel, this is the mellow nectar that is quaffed by the deities who never need the undertaker!"

"The mediæval rather than the classical spirit possesses me," said Morris, who was sitting opposite between Flava and Lotta. "I feel like a jolly monk of old when I let my eye rest on that beef and fowl. What do you think of it all, Mr. Charters?"

"Simply great, Mr. Morris, simply great."

After the meal was over, most of the girls went down to the house to change their attire. Pauline, however, remained behind talking with Glass-case. Then in a little while these two persons walked over to Dayton, who happened to be standing alone enjoying the view.

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

"Mr. Woodford," began Glass-case, "Miss Grandis says there is a phenomenally interesting spot not far from here with plashing springs, babbling brooks, foaming cascades and all that sort of thing. It is rather difficult for a large party to go there, and so the guide usually says nothing about it. She will show us the way, if you care to come."

Dayton wondered if this was the mysterious plan. But as Glass-case was also to be of the company there seemed to be no possibility of anything happening beyond what was strictly conventional. So he at once consented, and the three went off together.

Dayton noticed that they struck out in quite a new direction. They soon arrived in a densely-wooded region where they went in Indian file, and those in front had to be careful to hold the branches for those coming behind, or the latter would receive many an unpleasant blow in the face. At the head of the little procession moved Pauline, next came Glass-case, and Dayton closed the rear. It was hard to perceive just where they were going, but at last it was evident that they were proceeding rapidly down hill along a rather slippery and narrow path which lay between high rocks. All at once the rocks ceased on one side. Pauline stopped instantly. Glass-case could not check himself in time, and would have run against her, but she seemed to step suddenly aside into a sort of niche in the cliff-like wall. Then, falling forward, he lost his footing and rolled down a steep bank into a pool of water about six feet below. Dayton came near following him, but Pauline was able to catch him before he fell.

"Oh! are you hurt, Mr. Glassford?" called Pauline from above.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Not hurt, unless internally; but powerfully wet outside," was the poor fellow's mournful answer.

"Come, I'll give you a hand," said Dayton, who let himself cautiously down the slope and assisted Glass-case back to the path.

Even in his present plight the young man retained much of his habitual serenity.

"The pool is surprisingly damp down there," he said, "and rather mucky as well. I'm going back to camp to fix up. I've seen enough of water under some of its forms for to-day. But neither of you must be disappointed on my account. I know my way home alone."

Glass-case was dripping like a Newfoundland dog, and it was apparent that even the most ravishingly beautiful scene would find him unresponsive. As Pauline was politely insistent on showing Dayton the interesting spot they had already come so far to see, there was nothing for the latter to do but to proceed with her.

"See you later!" Glass-case called back cheerfully.

With care they were able to pass the dangerous place. But the path continued to grow worse. It crossed high above a ravine on some slippery logs over which Pauline pursued her way with amazing sure-footedness.

"Whatever that girl knows or does not know," thought Dayton to himself, "she is perfectly at home in the forest primeval."

"When I was a little girl I used to climb trees," was all the remark Pauline made.

At last, to Dayton's undoubted relief, they arrived safely. But his toil was repaid by the scene which

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

met his gaze. Out of some underground channel poured a fair-sized stream which eddied about the stones in its course until it came to the edge of a cliff and then swept over in a broad ribbon-like fall, dropping in foam on the rocks far below.

"This is very beautiful," observed Dayton. "It is unfortunate that the place is so difficult of access."

"Some day they will make a road, and then everybody will come here. If you look down through the ravine you can see part of the upper valley of the Clearwater. We have passed around to the west side of the mountain."

"I am, however, not sure, Miss Grandis, that I could find my way back."

"Then I have you somewhat at my mercy, Mr. Woodford?"

"I believe you have, Miss Grandis." Then a dark suspicion crossed his mind. "Will any accident happen to me?"

She looked at him quickly. "You mean something like what befel Mr. Glassford? No, unless you are very careless and bring it on yourself."

"Might I suggest, Miss Grandis, that you are a little enigmatical?"

"All women are. You know that is an ancient platitude."

"I believe you have taken this scene out of a book."

"Why do you think so?"

"You make use of the word 'platitude.' Am I not right?"

"Yes, I may as well confess. You have struck it, Mr. Woodford."

"Do you think that I can act my part properly?"

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Perhaps I'll not be able to do my own part right."

"Miss Grandis, I am going to violate the order of proceedings laid down in the book. I make the proposition that after a moment's further observation of this beautiful scene we return to the farm-house."

"But perhaps I, too, have done something different from what is in the book. I may not be sure of the way back either." She spoke demurely.

This startling statement made Dayton realize his position. Pauline certainly did have him at her mercy. If she refused to stir, he could not go back without her. Glass-case would arrive dripping and would no doubt explain the whole mishap. Everyone would know that Dayton and Pauline were admiring a view which an unhappy accident had prevented their companion from enjoying. If he arrived likewise in a half-wild condition, with clothes torn after making his way through the forest by sheer sense of direction, the result would be either an undying joke at the expense of Glass-case and himself or comments of another kind. In this annoying little adventure Dayton recognized his just punishment for the manner in which he had forced himself upon Constance, though his purpose on that occasion had been the best-intentioned in the world. He realized that the sexes should always play fair with each other. Either could take tremendous advantage of its position, if it so willed.

Then rapidly came the question, What could Pauline expect to gain by making him angry in this way? Yet he reflected that he would not have suspected anything whatever amiss but for Lotta's marvellous intuition. It was so ridiculously easy

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

to dispose of Glass-case in any of a hundred slippery places through which they had come. All that Pauline had to be careful of was that Dayton should not accompany their companion in the latter's downfall. The next question now was, How would Pauline proceed to make use of the absolutely uninterrupted *tête-à-tête* which she had secured in such an effective manner? Further, what ought to be his own action under the circumstances? Should he be morose or should he treat the whole matter lightly as a joke? The latter course was, after all, the only sensible one.

"So we are two lost children in the wood," said Dayton at last.

"Well, before the birds cover us with leaves, let us talk about something. You are strangely quiet, Mr. Woodford."

"Shall we speak of the waterfall?"

"No, nothing in the line of water interests me except the seaside."

"Can we talk of something nearer than that?"

"Perhaps." She smiled brightly.

"You had better suggest the subject, Miss Grandis."

"Well, Mr. Charters, then."

"We should not gossip about our neighbor."

"Do you want to scold me?"

"No, I was thinking only of my own sins."

"I don't mind. I want to talk about him."

"Very well, I am under your command. I must obey."

"It is to be Mr. Charters, then. He is a very clever man."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"I have been already told so on good authority. Your statement confirms the fact."

"You don't think him clever?"

"I cannot judge from my brief acquaintance with him."

"Oh, he doesn't shine in society, not by a *great* sight. But he's smart all the same."

"Having admitted this quality, I am calmly waiting for something more regarding him."

"Don't you know something about him?"

"No."

"Sure?"

"Not a thing."

"He's engaged to Constance Lyman." Dayton sat calm. Not a muscle of his face twitched. So his quickly-rejected suspicion was true.

"How do you know this, Miss Grandis?" he asked.

"He told me so himself."

"Directly?"

"No, I got it out of him."

"That is an interesting fact established. We can now go on to the next one."

"There is no next. We are going to talk about this."

"A matter so personal to Mr. Charters may not be of general interest."

"Oh, isn't it? Do you love Miss Lyman?"

"Really, Miss Grandis, your question is very direct."

"Yes, that is my way, direct and to the point."

"Did we come here, bringing Mr. Glassford to his doom, that I might be asked this—direct question?"

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

"No, not exactly. I wanted to show you the waterfall, and—and—there may have been some other reason, but I have changed my mind about that."

"A direct question is hard to answer, Miss Grandis. Some people even feel absolved from replying to such a question truthfully."

"May I answer it for you, Mr. Woodford?"

"Of course, everybody is entitled to an opinion about his neighbor's feelings."

"You love her."

"That is very interesting. How do you know?"

"Mr. Charters told me."

"Did he say where he got his reliable or unreliable information?" Dayton was fast losing his temper in spite of himself. Matters had now reached a stage where a joke could no longer be considered a joke.

"He guessed it, I suppose."

"It would appear that my affairs have formed the topic of a conversation in which Mr. Charters and possibly others took part."

"No, there were just him and me." Miss Grandis seemed to be oblivious both of grammar and of Dayton's rising wrath.

"Do you often have such very interesting conversations?"

"Yes, why not? He has been making love to me."

"I am astonished at more than one thing, Miss Grandis. But perhaps what most astonishes me is that I am favored with this information."

"Yes, I am going to tell you some things that are to be considered confidential, for I trust you."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

You are all right, you are 'the goods,' as the boys say."

Was this guileless simplicity or was there more plotting behind? How could Dayton be trustful after Glassford's fall?

"Are you going to allow Mr. Charters to continue making love, if I may be permitted also to ask a direct question?"

"Oh, dear no, unless he is serious. I have told him he must throw Miss Lyman over or expect soon to see the last of me."

"I can understand now why you fancied I might be interested in this startling information. It is possible that Miss Lyman may be freed from her engagement and in that event I should have an opportunity of preferring my suit."

"But the matter is, I am afraid, not quite so simple as that, Mr. Woodford. When I mention Miss Lyman, Dicky (I usually call him that) squirms and squirms. There is some reason for this squirming, and I have tried hard to find it out. But I have failed every time. I can't even make a good guess. Sometimes I think it is a financial reason and then sometimes I think it isn't."

"Have you yet fixed any date for Mr. Charters' final decision on the question?"

"No, I haven't yet. But girls don't do it that way usually. Some day they suddenly make up their minds, and the fellow has to toe the mark there and then or quit. But I should like to know a little more before I squeeze Mr. Charters too hard—no, I mean, sit down on him——no, not that, put him in a corner is what I mean to say."

After this struggle to obtain a felicitous expression

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

Pauline became silent. Dayton was perfectly willing to leave her undisturbed, as she had truly given him much food for thought.

"There is no reason why we should not be friends," she said at last, "if you are willing, Mr. Woodford. One fault I haven't got. I don't hold any grudges."

As Dayton did not know why she should in any case have a grudge against him, he was somewhat at a loss to understand her words. He was not aware that Pauline in her big, silly heart had taken a fancy to him, but, finding him unresponsive in the midst of a most profound *tête-à-tête*, she had at once come to her senses and had given up wishing for what she could not obtain, being now determined to try definitely for second-best in the person of Mr. Charters.

"I shall be glad to be on friendly terms, Miss Grandis, particularly if you can find a way to take us out of this maze in which we have become involved."

She laughed good-naturedly.

"I was only teasing you a little while ago. I know the way back perfectly well. Come this way, please."

They began their journey, and passed through all perils without accident.

On coming out upon the lawn, they were told that Mr. Glassford, in returning after his mishap, had lost his way and had arrived only a short time before. He was now at the house procuring a change of clothing. A moment later they saw him emerge and come sauntering in their direction. It was manifest that he had on somebody's Sunday clothes.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

The person who habitually wore them was evidently tall and stout, while Glass-case was somewhat short and thin. The legs of the trousers were rolled up in two or three folds. The coat hung loosely about the shoulders. The waistcoat bagged in a decided manner. Yet above them all the countenance of the young man preserved its accustomed calm.

"You see that I am clothed and also in my right mind," he said, and looked narrowly at Pauline.

"I am sorry to hear that you missed your way, when you were coming back," remarked Dayton.

"Yes, I traced up every cowpath on the hill before I found one that led me out of the woods. How do you like this outfit? There's an odor of good sermons about it, but I have not yet been able to decide what is the particular brand."

Others of the party now gathered round Glass-case, and thus Dayton was able to make his escape to where he saw William sitting at the extreme limit of the lawn and contemplating the landscape that was slowly darkening as night came on.

"I am glad to see you, Dayton," William said. "Lotta was much worried about you. I tried my best to comfort her by saying that the young lady would hardly throw you over a cliff. Evidently Glassford was the man to suffer."

"There are experiences that are better untold, William. Glassford, I fancy, suspects foul play."

"Very possibly, but he is not likely to say anything. So we can regard the incident as satisfactorily closed. But you should have seen Charters, while you were gone. Morris said he was as uneasy 'as a toad on a hot griddle.' The poor man remarked to me at least five different times that the

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

scenery was 'great.' When he saw Glassford come forth he at once went into the woods. I see he is just emerging now."

"Did Morris suspect anything?"

"I think not. The thing was so cleverly done that I should not have had a suspicion but for some vague hints from Lotta."

"Lotta gave me a warning too, but I was stupid enough to allow myself to be caught. Still I obtained some strange information through my experience. But I fancy it will not be of much use except to make me feel red-hot. I shall try not to think of it."

"I suppose it concerns one of those matters with which a man must deal by himself alone. You are assured of my sympathy and help, if I can serve you in any way."

"William, you are the closest friend I have, except perhaps Lotta, and if either of you could give assistance, I should hasten to ask it from you. But, as you say, a man has to face certain difficulties single-handed."

"That is true, and you are the sort of man that will stand to his guns. I see that Lotta is leaving the crowd and is coming this way."

When the young girl came up, she bestowed on Dayton a delighted smile. "I suppose you are a wiser man, but not quite so sad as some others," she said, mischievously. "Mr. Glassford is already growing weary of telling how the accident happened."

"I am very sorry for Mr. Glassford," said Dayton, "but he is bearing up wonderfully well."

"Will you kindly excuse us for a moment, Dayton. I should like to speak to William."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

So the brother and sister moved away a few paces and engaged in conversation.

"They are," thought Dayton, as he watched them standing together in the soft twilight, "the highest type that our civilization can produce. I suppose William could tell the kind of soil and the commercial value of every farm in all that plain. He trains himself thoroughly in the technical side of his calling. Yet he finds time to delight in Shakespeare, does not forget the ancient classics, reads German, speaks French, and is not without interest in art. This is the marvellous union of the humanistic and the practical, which some have thought impossible except in the case of persons enjoying a specially fortunate position. Imagine a commonwealth in which any considerable number of the citizens were such as he! It would be the Utopian vision of the wise men in all its splendid reality. The heart of our people is sound. It comes of a good stock with an intellectual power wide beyond precedent. But we are allowing the humanistic to die. The aim of our education, when there is an aim, is often to make trained barbarians, as William justly says. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find men who appreciate anything beyond a crude kind of scholarship. The hopes, the aspirations, the lofty conceptions, the mighty power of expression, that belong to the works which the great men of our race have bequeathed us, are being regarded as matters of less and less account in the pursuit of the husks of an empty learning. I believe William is entirely right."

When the two young people had concluded their conversation, William, with a friendly nod to Day-

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

ton, went off towards the house. Lotta came over and took her brother's place.

"William has to go off," she said, "to see about some things before we start. The driver is waiting for the moon to come up. Meanwhile, I can have the pleasure of a talk with you. Is it not wonderfully warm, when one considers how late in the season it is?"

"Yes, it is quite warm, but I fancy it will grow cool quickly, now that the sun has gone down."

Suddenly the electric lights flashed out in the streets of Royaltown far below.

"The stars have come out on the earth," said Lotta. "Let us see what those above us are doing. I see only the big stars. They haven't yet lighted up the smaller ones."

"It seems strange, Lotta, that not so long ago in the history of the world your remark would have been taken seriously. How rapidly we progress in some ways and how slowly in others! Do you know, Lotta, I was just now saying to myself that you and your brother represent for me the perfect type of civilization. To me you seem marvellously learned, and yet you make no parade of your learning. You affect neither an intellectual nor a social superiority. Everybody is treated by you in the same way, without distinction, whether he is high or low, rich or poor, master or servant, wise or unwise."

"You touch upon what I have been trained in most carefully. It seems natural to a girl to be supercilious to people sometimes. But I have heard my father and mother so often say that one should consider only the men and the women in the world, and not the things which they may or may not

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

possess, that every human being who acts rightly is worthy of respect just because he is a human being, and that in our country we should take pride in having no distinctions of rank, residence or calling. I try always to remember, but sometimes I forget. It is so hard not to feel immensely above people who break the rules of grammar, have not very good table manners, or are poorly or unfashionably dressed. But it is very silly, and only shows one's own lack of good breeding."

"You are right, Lotta. It does show ill-breeding, and yet what a host of people would seem to say by their actions that they believe the contrary to be the case. How commonplace and familiar all this sounds, when we talk about it! It appears to be new and surprising simply because you and your brother live it. I was thinking also of other qualities in which you represent an ideal perfection."

"Oh, pray, Dayton, do not continue. You will make us unbearably conceited. You are our best friend, and it is the duty of a friend to tell one's faults as well as one's virtues."

"When I find the faults, I shall speak of them, but I have not found them yet. Meanwhile, it is growing cool, and we had better follow the example of the others and go down to the house."

The stars were now all visible. The moon also was showing signs of rising.

"When I look at the stars," said Dayton, "our earth appears to me like a railway carriage at night, from which we see the lights in town and country as we pass. All beyond is darkness. In the same way we look out at the suns scattered in the nearest fields of ether far beyond which is the infinite nothing or

ROYAL MOUNTAIN

the infinite something, soundless, lightless, to all our senses unknown and unknowable."

When they arrived at the house, they found Morris standing in the middle of the large kitchen, engaged in delivering a speech.

"The form of this presentation," he was saying, "differs somewhat from that which is usual in such cases. For the presentation address on this occasion has to contain not only expressions of the highest eulogy for the splendid way in which this party has been entertained, but also terms of persuasion sufficiently honeyed to extract a suitable sum from the pockets of these hard-headed, close-fisted——"

"Are you thinking of adding 'cloven-footed'?" asked Charlie.

"I object," said Glassford. "That epithet might lead to misunderstanding. Possibly it might be thought to be properly applicable only to the speaker of the evening."

"It must be remembered that it is not 'unsteady-footed,'" remarked Morris, amid general laughter.

"I resume, ladies and gentlemen. As I was saying just now, these hard-headed, close-fisted representatives of the human race here assembled. Mr. Woodford, would you kindly pass round the hat to the gentlemen only. Ladies are not eligible to contribute. Each person will allow the coins to drop easily and readily into the receptacle of contribution without causing the royal head thereon to ache or the features to contort through excess of pressure before letting go. Thank you, Mr. Woodford."

Then, adding his own quota, Morris presented the total amount to the hostess for herself, her two daughters, the guide and the little boy. The re-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

ipient acknowledged the gift after a simple and somewhat embarrassed fashion.

Now the driver came to the door, calling in, "Everybody ready?" Instantly the room was all commotion. Wraps were put on amid a babel of exclamations.

"Are you going to wear your Sunday suit to town, Glassford?" inquired Charlie.

"Why, of course, my dear boy," returned Glasscase, serenely. "How else could I arrive? My ordinary gear wrapped in oil-cloth is already stowed in the van."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CLUB.

ON the following day, which was Saturday, Dayton went out to the Ellson farm "to recuperate after the exertions of yesterday," as he informed William. The afternoon proved to be dull and cold, and so it was spent indoors. A comfortable fire glowed in a grate. Everybody was busy in his own way. Mrs. Ellson was writing a letter. William was making the final copy of an article which he had written for an agricultural magazine. Dayton was looking through a bundle of home papers which he had recently received from his father. Lotta and Ann were sitting together in a corner, tracing out the course of the transcontinental railways on a map.

"What did Mr. Walter say about the advantages of the Hudson Bay route, Ann?" asked Lotta.

"He gave us some figures showing how much shorter it was to send western grain to England by that way! He talked quite a long time, explaining all about these railways, but I could hear only half of what he said, for that villain Adolphus sat right behind and kept whispering low to me:

There once did live a conductor, stout

As ever rode in a car.

He worked on the Roar and Racket Route,

The famous R. R. R.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

At last Mr. Walter saw what he was doing, and asked him a whole lot of questions that he could not answer. So Adolphus was silent after that."

Then the two heads got together once more, until finally the arduous task was completed.

"Well, Ann, that's done, and I am mentally exhausted. Let us make Dayton talk. I don't believe he is interested in that paper one bit."

"Is the lesson fully prepared, girls? How many culverts are there on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway between Montreal and Winnipeg?"

"The class can't answer. Please, teacher, will you tell us?"

"School is dismissed for to-day. You can think over the answer to that question and tell me to-morrow."

"What a clever teacher you would make, Principal Woodford! We'd really like to attend his school, wouldn't we, Ann?"

"Yes, but I fancy he might be severe."

What Dayton's reply to Ann's criticism would have been, can never be known. For just then the bell rang, and Mrs. Ellson and Lotta left the room to receive a visitor. Ann excused herself, because she had to assist in preparations for dinner. Dayton and William went off together to discuss some proposed improvements at the barns.

At dinner the visitor was found to be an estimable maiden lady, who was of a serious turn of mind, but who had, nevertheless, one joke of which she invariably made use upon a suitable occasion. As everybody expected it, and so laughed almost immoderately when it came, there was small wonder that the poor lady became confirmed in the belief that

THE CLUB

the joke was an exceptionally good one. The meal progressed tranquilly until the awaited moment arrived.

"Will you have some of this pie, Miss Strait?" asked Mrs. Ellson.

"No, thank you, Mrs. Ellson, I am not pious to-day," said Miss Strait.

Dayton caught a glimpse of William's calm, restrained smile. He did not dare to look at Lotta for fear of unfortunate results. At the same time he felt his shoulder lightly touched by a tray which Ann was carrying. Through the exercise of some self-control there was no undue outburst of hilarity. The rest of the meal passed off decorously.

After dinner William remarked to Dayton, "You should come out to the club this evening. There is certain to be a gathering of the celebrities."

Now the "club" was the highly dignified name given to the common meeting-place of the farm. Originally this had been a room off the stables, where William and his men kept any finer tools or other instruments that were necessary in farm work, went to consult books on agricultural subjects, or sat about during their idle time. The young farmer did not like this arrangement, as the farm increased in size. He was anxious to have a small, separate building, which could be used for other purposes as well; but he felt that he could not afford such a bit of extravagance. His grandfather learned, however, of William's desire, and insisted on paying for the erection of a neat structure. It was built close to the house-manager's dwelling, and was looked after by him. There were in it a large room, a small room and a basement. When the municipality adopted a local

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

option law, and the neighboring tavern was closed, the "club" became a common rendezvous for the community, especially on Saturday evenings. William thereby gained a considerable amount of popularity.

When the young men entered the main room, a small group had already gathered. A fire was burning in the stove, and around it the company sat smoking in various comfortable attitudes. Now and then some one would move over to a table and glance at a pile of magazines that lay upon it. Dayton was introduced to everybody.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Woodford," said one old man. "You are an American, are you not?"

Dayton admitted the fact.

"I might easily have been a Yankee myself," continued the old man. "I had some good chances to go across the line. Two of my cousins did go, and they fought in the war. We seemed to have much more to do with the States in those days. It really looked as if the countries might be joined some day. But they brought on this tariff business, and separated everything. We went into confederation and bought the North-west. Now all the talk is about the Empire and the navy. The world has changed a lot since I was young."

"I understand that your country has been quite transformed within a generation."

"Yes, there have been great changes, great changes, Mr. Woodford. Are you thinking of staying long in Canada?"

"To tell the truth, I have now such extensive interests in this country that I may find it advisable to settle here permanently."

THE CLUB

"That is right. Americans always do well in Canada. They find it easy to get on, because they know all about the way we do things here. People coming from Europe have a great deal to learn."

Some of the old men spoke of their personal affairs with surprising freedom. One aged citizen had derived from his life experience a single philosophic truth which he appeared to comprehend with intense vividness.

"I have been married twice, Mr. Woodford," he said, "but I am now a widower and live with my oldest boy, son to my first wife. Ah, she was a fine woman. We both worked hard early and late to pay for our farm. She seemed scarcely ever to spend money on clothes, and yet she was always neat and respectably dressed. The house was clean and well kept, too. One day she suddenly took sick and died, and we buried her in the prime of life. My second wife was a very nice kind of a woman. But she was no manager at all. She always appeared to be working, but everything round the house was half the time dusty or dirty. She spent no end of money on clothes, but she never looked as if she was dressed. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Woodford, that we lost the farm my first wife helped pay for. As true as I am telling you, there's an awful odds in women." He repeated the words over and over, "an awful odds, an awful odds."

Just at this moment three men entered. One of them was recognized as Pierre Beaulieu, who was up from the eastern markets buying horses. Everybody shook hands with him, pronouncing his Gallic name with shades of variation from "Booloo" to

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Bully." Pierre was a native of the grand old county of "Tarre-bonne," but now lived in Montreal.

"How is the wheat moving at Montreal?" William asked.

"Plenty of western wheat now coming in," answered Pierre.

Then a discussion began as to the season's crop. Dayton knew what wheat meant to Canada. At the time of harvest the merchants talked of wheat, the drummers joked of wheat, the preachers preached of wheat, the journalists wrote of wheat, the lovers dreamed of wheat. Wheat! Wheat! The armies of harvesters went west with much turmoil in long, smoke-blackened trains. Soon from the prairies began to come little dribblets of grain, then a steady stream, at last a vast golden deluge. Night and day the heavy trains thundered through the wilderness, were relieved of their burden by the tireless mechanism of the elevators which transferred it to the deep-hulled steamers, to be borne over the great lakes forward to the sea. Wheat! Wheat! Beside this mighty potentate, king and viceroy and premier were as servants. Long live Emperor Wheat! It was said that of his reign this was but the beginning of the beginning.

The younger men talked of the yield.

"Have you seen how it is threshing out?" asked one.

"Pretty well, somewhere around thirty-five bushels to the acre. They say that at one place it is going forty-five. But I guess, Jack, that is unusual."

The older men compared present advantages with the difficulties of their own day.

THE CLUB

"Do you remember the way we used to cradle around the stumps, Tom?"

"Yes, our bush farms used to look quite different from the prairie land in Saskatchewan, where a man can see a dog on all the four corners of the quarter section."

Meanwhile, Pierre and William spoke together in French. Dayton guessed from the recurrence of the word "cheval" that a sale was under discussion. Suddenly the door opened. Lotta was outside, wishing to speak to William. After a moment's conversation she came in with her brother. It was interesting to observe what natural courtesy was possessed by these men in spite of their rough exterior. She shook hands with each person, for she knew everybody, and asked after wife or sister or daughter.

"What a fine girl you are growing to be," said one elderly man, looking at her admiringly. "It seems just like yesterday when your mother and father brought you round to our place. I guess it was the very first time you were taken out of the house for any distance. You were just as pretty a child as any one would want to see. I mind the missis saying to your mother that it was the proper thing on a farm for the oldest to be a boy and the next a girl. Your father was looking pretty well at that time, but he was never a strong man."

"You mustn't flatter me, you know, Mr. Simpson. How is that dreadful rheumatism?"

"Oh, it is not so bad of late, thank you."

To Pierre alone she had to be introduced.

"You not speak the French language like your brother, miss?"

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

“ Mais si, Monsieur Beaulieu, moi, je l'aime bien, cette belle langue.”

“ Oh, you are the true compatriot. I live at Montreal. Young girls will marier. When you do so, come visit us for the voyage de noces, the marriage journey.”

“ I intend to be an old maid.”

“ Not a vieille fille, fine-looking girl like you. Too bad, too bad! I have three girls, two on the school and one mariée. She the oldest. She has big, big famille, I forget now the nombre.”

The conversation continued in French, Lotta smiling a little at his quaint turns of expression. She promised that, if contrary to all probability she should get married, she would visit him in Montreal.

“ Correct!” Pierre replied. “ N'oubliez pas. Rue St. Denis. C'est une bonne maison neuve, deuxième étage.”

After Lotta's departure a little politics was talked. It was well understood that the member for the constituency, who was far advanced in years, would not again be a candidate for election.

“ Why don't you try for the nomination?” one of the men asked William. “ You are on the other side of politics from me, but I would mark my ballot for you all the same. You could poll a heavy vote in Royaltown, and the township would stand by you. In fact, if your party does not nominate somebody like you, it will give our fellows a fine chance to redeem the south riding.”

“ But I fancy Smith of the *Earth and Mars* would be a stronger candidate than I should be,” objected William.

“ Smith is talking federal politics. I don't be-

THE CLUB

lieve he would consider the local nomination. He's interested in the tariff and that sort of thing. But you are the very man we want in the legislature. You have ideas on agricultural development, education and the other provincial issues."

"You know that I have never been in politics at all," replied William. "Consequently, worry over the matter is not likely to disturb my sleep. Thanks all the same for your good opinion, Tom."

Soon after this the company began gradually to disperse. William said to Pierre, "Had you not better stay with us over Sunday? You can have the next room to this. You have been in it before, you know."

"It is kind, Mr. Ellson, that you offer me the room. I stay to Monday, if you like. Then we settle the sale."

"Yes, and meanwhile, James will show you the horse. You can try him in the buggy to-morrow. He will stand inspection."

"That is all right and kind of you. I am tired. I go now to the room, if you like."

"Yes, James will go with you to see that everything is in order, so that you may be comfortable. Mr. Woodford and I may owl a little beside this cheerful fire. Will that disturb you?"

"No, no. The instant I am in bed, I am profoundly asleep."

After Pierre was settled for the night, and everybody had gone, including James Glover, William and Dayton continued to sit before the fire. They drifted into one of their usual discussions.

"I do not know that I am anxious to enter the legislature," said William, after a while. "I be-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

lieve that for the present I can do quite as good work if I remain as I am. If I were to go to the House now, I should be speaking very much as a theorist, when advocating changes in the educational system of the province. And heaven knows that this country has enough of that class. The usual name is expert, as you no doubt are aware. I once attended an educational convention. The particular performance billed for that evening was an address by a young man on technical and agricultural education, and it was one of the most amusing things ever heard off the stage. The clever youth had annexed to his name certain assorted selections of the alphabet. It was evident that he had been incubated in one of the very special hatcheries for such birds. Gravely was it set down that he had not only a national, but an international reputation. With a tumult of loud-sounding, pseudo-technical phrases he began. He talked much about the schools of Germany, and explained concerning them in a very marvellous way. Yet it gradually became clear that he had never been in Germany, had scarcely any acquaintance with the German language, and was totally unfamiliar with the life and instincts of the German people. In the same magnificent manner he spoke of the educational systems of France and other countries. But what surprised me most was that row on row of intelligent people, in truth, the teachers and school trustees of the country, sat and listened calmly to this ponderous nonsense. It has been said that the Englishman loves a lord. But we Canadians dearly love a degree, and indeed in some matters we will not pay heed to anything else. If you look at the calendars of our universities, you will see a vast number of per-

THE CLUB

mutations of the letters of the alphabet. Yet we are not satisfied. Fresh ones must be continually devised in order to appease our appetite. Oh, the sham of it all. Who was that great man of your nation who said that the public liked to be humbugged?"

"Barnum," said Dayton.

"That's the man. It is true of the people of this country, at least. How delighted we are at being humbugged! If any one comes before us with an A. B. C. tag to his name, we are ready at once to consider him a Solon and to listen to him humbly. The reason, of course, is that we have not yet reached a stage of development where we can tell the difference between the true and the false in matters of learning, literature, art, and many branches of science. Consequently, the outward semblance frequently receives our worship instead of the inward reality. We prefer to the light of the steady sun and stars that of the roving comet, with its vast alphabetical tail. Now I have no hostility to degrees when they represent genuine learning. It is only when they are divorced from this that they become supremely ridiculous. Many of our experts have not even a good general education, if any proper standard were applied to their attainments."

Dayton always enjoyed seeing William in the midst of a strong statement of his opinions on any subject. The young farmer's eyes would sparkle, he would sit erect in his chair, and, when he wished specially to emphasize a point, he would rise and walk about the room. William, who was now at the other end of the apartment, saw his friend smiling, and came back to his seat.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"The reason of my warmth is that we suffer a good deal in this province from empty pretence. In no matter is this more true than in that of rural education. The most irrational projects have been advocated by the experts. Now I am going to calm down and explain what I mean. There is no good education possible without a good teacher. This may be regarded as an axiom. How do we treat the teacher? We pay him a salary on which a common laborer would not care to exist, and we make his position so precarious that he does not know at what time he will be turned off to starve or thrive, as fortune may decide. After years of hard work under such conditions, he must in his old age become a market-gardener, keep a pig and a cow, or go to a house of refuge. Most of our great national problems are in the last analysis questions of education, and this is the way in which we treat the persons on whom we rely for their solution. It is small wonder that the male class of teachers is becoming extinct, and the better class of female teachers is following on the same road. Our rural schools have not only not progressed, but they are, I believe, in many essential respects inferior to those of a generation ago. You have seen the splendid schools of Royaltown. Compare them with the rural schools, and see what a handicap there is now against the country boy. Yet it is a well-known fact that a majority of the leaders of the nation have in the past come from the country. Consequently, if you let the rural schools lag behind, you are to a very considerable extent injuriously affecting national progress. What do the experts suggest? Some look to France or Germany or England, and wish to

THE CLUB

transplant to our soil a system that may be wholly unsuited to us and our conditions. Others suggest more machinery, more red tape, a more thorough system of inspection, the addition of new subjects, and so on. One can scarcely exercise patience enough to go over the list. But nothing effective is offered to smooth the financial path of the teacher. Therefore, if any person is so unwise as to remain in the profession, there is ordinarily in prospect according to the individual's sex either matrimony or the poorhouse."

"I suppose if the men marry, they make sure of both?"

"Right you are, old man," said William. "Now with all due humility, as I am not an educational expert, I beg to say that I believe we are going to find a solution of the difficulty in this section. There are three trustees, of whom I am one. Two of us are favorable to a change in the school. The third is quite an old man who is going to retire at the end of the year. When the matter came up, he said, 'I think you are right, both of you. But I am too old a man to deal with this. Leave it off for the present. My son will probably soon take my place on the board, and you know he agrees with you on these questions.' When we make any change, we should like the board to be unanimous. So we are waiting till the new member is elected. Then we are going to engage a permanent teacher. We shall give him a contract for a certain term of years, and pay him the highest salary we can afford. We already know whom we are going to choose. He is the principal of a village school, but he does not like the outlook in his present position. A certain num-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

ber of the trustees wish to turn him off. Indeed, he has a majority of only one in his favor, and any accident of election may change that into a minority. I may mention that there is no other reason for opposition to him on the part of some of the trustees than the fact that they were originally opposed to his appointment, and were outvoted. He is so disgusted with the precarious tenure of his present position that he is willing to come to us at a lower salary, if we give him a permanent contract. Now, we should be afraid to depart so much from precedent if my grandfather had not offered to pay for the erection of a new school-house, according to any plan we may adopt. You probably know that my grandfather is a very wealthy man. The old school building is not what it once was, and the ratepayers are so delighted at being relieved of the necessity of paying for a new school that they are willing to give us a free hand. We have had the plans prepared. I have them over here in this cupboard."

William had walked across the room, while he was speaking, and had taken out some blueprints, Dayton and he examined them on the table.

"You will readily comprehend the plan. It is to be a combined school and teacher's residence. You see this is a good-sized classroom. In the other part of the building the teacher lives. A couple of rooms in the residential portion are so arranged that they can on occasion be used for the teaching of household subjects. There is also a basement, part of which will be fitted up as a carpenter shop. The teacher has a wife who is willing to undertake the task of instructing the girls in home duties, while he himself is interested in carpentry and gardening.

THE CLUB

My grandfather intends to furnish the schoolroom and residence in first-class style, and I think that, when all has been fully carried out, the people of the section will be much delighted and will never desire to revert to ancient conditions. I am myself looking forward to having a person near at hand with whom I can discuss questions of horticulture. I believe that his work in this department will have an excellent effect on the community."

"These matters are extremely interesting," said Dayton, "when they are explained so clearly. It is a pity that the majority of people trouble themselves very little about such things. Yet it is in the enlightening power of education that lies the chief hope for the progress of a nation in all that is worth while."

"I thought that you would be interested," returned William. "That is why I have ventured to unburden myself to your sympathetic ears. Our present teacher, Miss Sloane, is leaving us at the end of the year because of matrimonial reasons. She has done even better work than could rightly be demanded in return for the scanty pay which she has received. Last year, however, my particular friend on the board and myself insisted upon the traditional salary being somewhat increased. We can hardly expect any teacher to train himself as thoroughly as he should be trained, and be content to accept a position in a rural school under the present conditions. As I have already said, I believe we have solved the difficulty. We have selected the man we want, and we have tried to meet the conditions that will bring him to us. He has the true scholar's spirit, knows a good deal about science and languages,

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

and is of such a superior type that it is a marvel that he has remained in the business as long as he has. He tells me that, if we had not made our unexpected offer, he would have taken up some other work in a short time. We shall probably offer him a long term contract, a free residence, a small plot of land, and a certain allowance for books and scientific instruments. We shall safeguard ourselves by providing that the contract may be terminated at any time, if the inspector of schools for the county decides that the teacher's work is below a certain standard of excellence. Personally, I should prefer to trust the teacher, and I believe that my confidence would not be misplaced, but I should not be able to persuade my colleagues. Our inspector is a fairly reliable man. There was a little difficulty over his appointment, which was made a few years ago. At that time the most suitable man for the position in the county was not eligible for appointment through some requirement of red-tape. If we could have had this man, we should have secured a thoroughly sane educationist. Unfortunately, the man chosen for the position has in his head several kinds of 'bugs,' as they are called in the vulgar tongue. These result from the too ardent pursuit of educational novelties, familiarly known as 'fads.' But it is at any rate better to have a person with several varieties rather than with only one, for they are likely to be to a certain extent mutually destructive. You must not think me too severe, because he is really a very fine fellow, and his chief fault lies in his being overhasty in wishing to adopt every new fashion in education, whether it is sensible or the reverse. But, Dayton, I am expecting a yawn from

THE CLUB

you. It is already growing late. I shall add 'to be continued in our next issue,' and conclude for the present. We do not seem to have much disturbed Pierre, if one may judge by the sounds that are becoming audible. I'll put these blueprints back."

They closed the outer door of the building, and went off to the house. A light was burning, when they entered. They caught sight of Lotta and Ann engaged in conversation with a book between them.

"Owls," said Lotta, briefly.

"The same to you likewise," returned William.

"Why, girls, you are missing your beauty sleep."

"We don't need any. Do we, Ann?"

"Not one bit," said Ann.

"What are you reading?" asked Dayton.

"*L'Abbé Constantin*," answered Ann. "Lotta is reading it aloud, and we are talking about it in French. Lotta speaks French beautifully. She learned it from her father, when she was a little girl. I can't speak very well yet. But I am improving, because Lotta is so kind as to help me."

"Ann is too modest. She really speaks well," protested Lotta.

"It seems strange that so few English-speaking Canadians know French," remarked Dayton. "French is one of the official languages of your country, is it not?"

"Yes," answered William. "But there is a ridiculous prejudice against it. Yet the largest French-speaking city, except Paris, will soon be situated in Canada. It is a pity that our people do not make better use of their opportunities in this respect."

"Are you going to stay to-morrow, Dayton?" asked Lotta.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"I think I shall, and then I intend to carry William off and hold him by main force for three days. Mr. Smith and I have almost reached the fighting stage over some disputed points of public policy, and we want your brother to act as umpire."

"What fun boys have when they are alone," said Lotta.

"What fun girls can have, too, without the boys," asserted Ann, stoutly.

"Do you know that I feel hungry?" said William, suddenly. "Haven't you some internal pangs, Dayton?"

"Wolves!" said Lotta.

"Let us make a raid on the pantry," suggested William.

"What will your mother say, Ann?" exclaimed Lotta, in pretended horror.

"In order to have the responsibility properly shared, I shall take Ann with me. You will take Lotta, Dayton, and we shall march two by two, as the animals used to proceed to Noah's pantry."

They passed through the great silent kitchen and entered the sacred place, with its groaning shelves.

"What a sight for mortal eyes!" exclaimed Dayton.

"Yes, there are apple, plum and mince piety, tomato and other sauce-iety, and meats in endless variety," responded Lotta.

"Really your mind is affected by your late hours," said William. "I must speak to the mater about it."

"Oh, mamma knows all about us, doesn't she, Ann?"

Ann's answer was a decided affirmative.

THE CLUB

"Let us all pick out what we like best," suggested Lotta, "and carry it out to the kitchen table."

Then occurred much scurrying about in pursuit of dainties, and many lively skirmishes for the possession of particular dishes. There was soon enough food set out to feed forty men. Then they took their seats at one end of the long table.

"Do you know what happened to me to-day, Dayton?" asked Lotta.

"I hope it was something pleasant."

"No, it is unpleasant for the old. I had a birthday."

"Indeed! To what great age have you attained?"

"I have passed from Fair Fifteen to Sweet Sixteen."

"May I ask a question?"

"I know what it is."

"What is the answer?"

"Never."

"Not strictly accurate," said William. "I gave Sis sixteen kisses with one to grow on early this morning. I caught her just as she was coming out of her bedroom."

"Your kisses do not count, brother mine. You are the most highly privileged of mortals."

"How would it be with mine?" asked Dayton.

"I am afraid *they* would!" said Lotta.

"I once knew a girl's school," said Dayton, "that adopted as its college yell something like this, 'Free Fourteen, not a care have I; Fair Fifteen, I've a dress to buy; Sweet Sixteen, I never was kissed; Sad Seventeen, what fun I have missed!' When the young ladies were not under strict surveillance, they

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

would sing it with much glee, to the great delight of onlookers."

"If the girls at the Collegiate were to sing that," said Ann, "I can imagine what Mr. Slater would say. He would have a grave face and a twinkle in his eye, and would remark, 'I have no doubt that you are quite sincere in what you are singing, young ladies, but would it not be better for the peace of mind of the young gentlemen that you should refrain in future?' And there wouldn't be a cheep out of a girl after that."

"Are you girls bunking together?" asked William.

"Yes," answered Lotta. "Ann and I are feeling lonesome at present, and we need each other's society. Furthermore, we wish to resume our practice at pillow-fighting."

"I think the furniture is well insured," said her brother.

"Do you remember, Ann, what happened once, when we were spending the night together at your house?" exclaimed Lotta. "We'll tell Dayton. That night we had just gone to Ann's room upstairs. Ann placed the lamp on a table close to an open window. I picked up a pillow suddenly and, meaning to hit her, struck the lamp instead, and it went right out of the window. William was coming over to see Ann's father about something, and narrowly escaped it. We gazed out of the window horrified, and called down to him, 'Are you hurt? Did it strike you?' He was provokingly nice. He looked up, and all he said was, 'Is this Hogan's alley? Will you lend me the loan of your gridiron? I have just broken mine over my husband, Mike.' But Ann's mother was so disgusted with us that she would

THE CLUB

not give us another lamp, and we had to go to bed in the dark."

"That was one of the many occasions when my sister's bloodthirsty instincts almost made an end of me. It is surprising that I have survived in such good health as really to require another helping of that delectable fowl, Lotta. That animal was no aeroplane when he was alive. He walked sedately about on the surface of the earth, and so there is plenty of substance to him now."

"You are gormandizing, William. If you do not soon cease from the error of your ways, you will to-night see all our ancestors back to the hundred and fifth generation. I am truly becoming alarmed."

But at last even William was satisfied. What remained of the food was quickly restored to its former place in the pantry, and the dishes were left for the morrow's washing.

As they were coming back through the house, they heard the telephone ring. Ann went to answer it.

"It's Gav," she said. "He has just received a telegram for Mr. Woodford."

"Tell him to open it," said Dayton, "and see if it is important."

In a moment Ann said, "He doesn't know what it means."

"Ask him to read it to us. I'll copy the words down, if you will be so good as to take them, Ann."

"These are what he says they are:

'Semaphore Junction, 15th.

'Called home great still hesitating absence fonder
you hope return p.'

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"I suppose the last letter is the signature," said Dayton. "Thank you very much, Ann. I fancy I have something now to keep me busy for the rest of the night. It is the first mysterious message that I have ever received. There is probably some kind of code to make sense out of this thing."

As afterwards he was walking with William toward his room, a thought struck him.

"Where does Pauline Grandis live, William, when she is at home?" he asked his friend.

"In St. Joseph."

"Where is Semaphore Junction?"

"On the way to St. Joseph. You have a two hours' wait between trains."

"That seems to explain the telegram."

"Yes, you will probably be able to make out its meaning."

After retiring to his room, Dayton had little difficulty in piecing out the message as follows:

"I have been called home. Mr. Charters is still hesitating. But absence makes the heart grow fonder. So you should continue to hope. I shall return. Pauline Grandis."

The reason for the telegram being sent was somewhat harder to puzzle out. Pauline was evidently keeping her word that she would be friendly. She had not yet been able to induce Mr. Charters to come to a definite decision. Perhaps she considered that the time had not arrived for "putting him in a corner." It was plain, however, that she was cheerfully confident of success. But still there was the question to be answered, Why had she adopted the unusual device of sending a telegram? Could she not just as easily have written? Was there any-

THE CLUB

thing in the message that it was important for him to know at once? He studied it carefully again. The information was interesting, but it would be of no practical use to him. He could do nothing but wait, while events over which he was able to exercise not the least control determined the future for Constance and himself. His opportunity for doing something would probably come when the wavering Mr. Charters had finally made up his mind. The sending of the telegram might be the result of its author's dull stay at the railway junction. Its enigmatical character seemed to point to such an origin. Pauline had found time hanging heavy on her hands, and had amused herself by devising a message which, while conveying friendly information, might cause Dayton some trouble in interpretation. For secrecy seemed hardly a sufficient motive for its cryptic nature. If it had said, "Nothing settled, be hopeful," its meaning would have been quite as intelligible and more secret also.

Having at last reached these conclusions, he found himself in a happier and more confident frame of mind. Time was thus far playing his game. Nothing was settled. Perhaps old Dame Fate was beginning to smile upon him.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRE.

WILLIAM came down and stayed the three days with Dayton, running out to the farm occasionally in his friend's car in order to look after this or that necessary matter. He umpired the contest with much success. In the intervals the question of William's nomination for the legislature was discussed. Smith wished to come out plainly in his favor at once. For a while William demurred. He thought that there were other men who had better claims. Smith was of quite a contrary mind, and considered that it would be well if the party disregarded the alleged "claims" of certain ambitious citizens. "The chances are," he said, "that we shall be whipped out of our boots if we don't select a man with a following both in the city and in the township. You are the only man in sight with this qualification. So much for the practical politician's view of the matter. But if we pay heed to higher considerations, can we find among the whole crowd of aspirants any one who may be compared with your honorable self in attainments or in honesty of purpose? We simply must have you, even if it is necessary to resort to compulsion."

At last William consented. "Now, remember, Mr. Smith," he said, "I have one idea at present, and I am going to keep hammering away at it in

THE FIRE

the legislature, should I be elected, until something effective is done. I want a radical reform of the rural public schools. I consider it not only a disgrace but a danger for a civilized state to hand over the most important duties outside of those of the home to be performed in haphazard fashion by any chance comer of the mob of waifs, strays and 'left overs' into which the personnel of the teaching profession is bound to degenerate in the country districts, unless some real work is done towards bettering the teacher's lot. When this reform is finally under way, I have some others of lesser importance to struggle for. I am going to fight with all my strength, if elected, and the only thing that will stop me is my defeat at the polls on the ensuing election day."

"You are the man for the job, Mr. Ellson," exclaimed Smith. "All the mighty influence of the *Earth and Mars* is at your disposal and the tricks of the practical politician will not prevail against you. Forward! Victory is ours already."

Consequently, the next day the *Earth and Mars* announced itself in favor of Mr. William Ellson as the local standard-bearer of the great party to which it had the honor to belong. In a calmly judicial article it discussed the merits of the other aspirants for nomination, but after examining carefully the whole field, it came to the conclusion that the party would make a serious mistake in the present circumstances if it ignored the pre-eminent qualifications, etc., etc.

One afternoon Dayton was sitting in his own special department of the offices of the legal firm, Allan, Fraser, Fraser and Allan, and was engaged in dictating some letters to a stenographer. Just

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

as he had finished and the young woman had retired, a visitor was announced. It proved to be no other than Lotta, who, dressed in simple white, looked even more bewitching than usual.

"Why, Lotta, I am glad to see you. You must be the last rose of summer."

"Yes, I am a little unseasonable in my attire. But I have important duties to perform at the bazaar which is being held this afternoon in aid of the hospital. Will you come over?"

"How much can I ransom myself for, if I stay away?"

"Let me think a moment. . . We'll let you off for five dollars."

"That is too cheap. You don't know how valuable I should be if you once got me there. I should buy everything that was offered me."

He took a blank cheque and filled it out for twenty-five dollars.

"How really splendid of you, Dayton! We never could have succeeded in selling you enough goods to make up that sum. I shall be proud, when I hand this to the president of the Hospital Aid Society."

"There is something else besides the bazaar, I believe, in this philanthropic enterprise. Is there not, Lotta?"

"Yes, a concert in the Opera House in the evening. The performers are all Royaltown people."

"I know that Mr. Smith is going to take part in one number, which is to be a brief but very exciting performance of a minstrel troupe. He has been searching all week among the dry bones of the grave-

THE FIRE

yard of old jokes, and he has got together some fearful skeletons."

"Oh, I think Mr. Smith will be good. He does so well whatever he undertakes. Are you going, Dayton?"

"I certainly am, for he says that he has a joke to fit each of the local celebrities, and that I am one."

"It will be funny to hear the joke about you. I suppose William will suffer, now that he is in politics."

"By the way, everything is favorable for your brother. Of course, there will be some grumbling among the disappointed ones, but Mr. Smith says that this is of no account, because the party must choose William or run the risk of losing the seat."

"William will look magnificent with the title M.P.P. I told him it did not mean 'member of the Provincial Parliament,' but 'maker of prodigious promises.'"

"You understand politics well already, Lotta. Who says women should not have the ballot?"

"I don't really want to vote. Of course, I should like to help William, if I could. I suppose you will vote for him?"

"I should be delighted to give him assistance, but in this case it will be only good wishes. I have no vote here."

"Would you please explain why to this densely ignorant young person?"

"I am not a British subject. I am still a liege of the great emperor at Washington."

"You could change, could you not, Dayton?"

"I can't forget a certain social event in ancient

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Boston, and I am afraid that if I had been present, I should have helped to dump some of that old tea into the harbor. Do you think that I could make a satisfactory citizen of the Great Dominion with such treasonable sentiments in my breast?"

"I believe you could, Dayton. But we shall like you just as well, even if you decide to remain an American."

"What a charming little subject of King George you are, Lotta. Why, you Canadians do not treat me as a foreigner at all. I feel just as much at home here, as if I were in my native state. . . Now, I see you are observing the great work which has been recently published. Let me show it to you."

The "County History and Atlas" was, in truth, a large and beautiful volume. The publisher had done his part very satisfactorily.

"This is quite an edition de luxe, Lotta, or an 'edition for the looks,' as Gav exclaimed, when he saw it. The maps are beautifully engraved. This one you see is the whole county. This other is Royaltown. Here we have your township."

"I see our farm," exclaimed Lotta, "and there is my lake. How funny to see my name on a map! I can trace the stream till it falls into Royal Creek."

"Here is Royal Mountain. You can follow the road till you arrive at the farmhouse. After the maps come the reading matter and the illustrations, chiefly provided by Judge Morris. All that I have done is, to help with the arrangement of it. There are portraits of the worthies of the county who were distinguished from an historical point of view, brief accounts of their career, pictures of natural scenes and of public buildings, and a vast number of other

THE FIRE

things too numerous to mention. The judge has been gathering material for years, simply from force of habit, he tells me, during the latter part of the time, for he had almost given up hope of doing anything with it. The lists of wardens, mayors and reeves on these pages are not entirely dull reading, when we reflect that the name of William Johnston, Esq., is to be found therein. Certainly the book must be interesting to the people who have been living here and know many of these gentlemen. Now, one of these valuable volumes is to be your own private property. See, I write on the blank page 'With the compliments of the authors.' Have you the car with you?"

"Yes, Ann's father, Mr. Glover, is outside with it."

"He can take charge of the volume, and so you will be able to have it home with you."

"Thank you very much, Dayton. This is the first book that I have ever received direct from the author. I feel proud to be so honored."

"Do not make fun of me. I have a very modest place in the great realm of authorship. In fact, I feel as if I had made my way in under false pretences."

"You need not try to beg off in that manner, Dayton. I am growing almost afraid of your greatness, especially since you occupy this magnificent office. I must now humbly say good-bye, or I shall be late at the bazaar."

"I'll go out with you, carefully carrying this massive volume."

Dayton dined at Judge Morris' that evening. He was not surprised to find Lotta and William also

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

there. Roy was present, having taken a run home for a day or two. Everybody went to the Opera House afterwards. All Royaltown that could gain admittance was within. The quality of the programme varied much, the good, the bad, and the indifferent being provided. But as the performers were well known, the bad was often as thoroughly enjoyed as the good. Our friends and neighbors are frequently depraved enough to take pleasure in the charming spectacle when we are making long-eared donkeys of ourselves.

At last the minstrel troupe took its place upon the stage. Beneath the sable hue familiar countenances were to be recognized. Smith was one of the "end men." We need not give the witticisms that winged their way to the audience. One would have to be more familiar with the intimate history of Royaltown than the reader is likely to be in order to appreciate their delightful quality. Finally, Smith went over to a dummy telephone at the side of the stage. It rang. There was apparently a moment's conversation. Then he stepped to the front and asked, "Is Dr. Jones in the building?"

Everyone saw the doctor's expansive form prominent in the second row of seats.

"Ah, I see you, doctor," continued Smith. "I have just received a message for you that the boy to whom you gave a quarter to call you out of the hall, is sick and can't come."

Naturally there was much merriment at the doctor's expense. But when, a few minutes later, he was actually summoned, and was with difficulty made to understand that it was a real case, the laughter became well-nigh uproarious. A short time after-

THE FIRE

ward an alarm of fire was heard, and the hose-reels clattered past the building. Some one outside shouted "Fire" two or three times. A few people at the back ran out, and matters began to look serious. A boy appeared in the wings and beckoned to Smith, who rose and talked for a moment with him. Meanwhile, the audience grew more and more restless. The shouting outside increased. Other persons went out. In a second the people might have risen *en masse* and rushed for the doors. But Smith was equal to the occasion. He stepped forward and said, "I am pleased to announce that Mr. Woodford's house is on fire."

The effect of the words was magical. Even the most timorous began to laugh, and the moment of danger passed. The tumult outside quickly subsided, and the programme went on.

But Dayton, knowing Smith so well, was inclined to fear that there was something really wrong at his house. It would be quite in accordance with Smith's character to make use of genuine information in this way in order to quell the panic. He also had great respect for Smith's ability to obtain reliable news before any one else. So he proceeded at once to leave the building. His departure was noticed, and was as much enjoyed as that of the doctor had been shortly before. Smiling good-humoredly, he reached the door. There a policeman spoke to him.

"That was no joke Smith was giving you. It's burning like mad already."

Dayton hurried outside. In front of the building a number of motor-cars and carriages were already drawn up, awaiting their owners, as the entertainment was now nearly over. Even as he paused he

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

heard the audience commencing to sing "God save the King." Mr. Lyman's chauffeur called to him, "Jump in, Mr. Woodford, and I'll take you over to your house in a jiffy. Here," he said to a boy sitting beside him, "you'll wait and tell Mr. Lyman that I'll be back right away, and that I have just taken Mr. Woodford to the fire."

Dayton expressed his thanks, sprang in, and was whirled away at top speed. On reaching the outskirts of the crowd that was watching the fire, he alighted, gave the chauffeur a coin, and began to make his way to the entrance. Every one stood aside respectfully. A large, healthy policeman at the gate said, "I am sorry, Mr. Woodford. She's going pretty fast. The fire ain't doing a thing to the back of the house."

Having at last reached the lawn, Dayton for the first time took a good look at the conflagration. The rear portion of the large structure seemed to be already given over to ruin. Against the black background of the smoke and darkness showers of sparks rose from the furnace below that roared with demoniac fury. Every now and then above the rest of the fire pinnacles of flame would shoot skyward, terminating in intense flashes of incandescence. It was evident that nothing human could stay the unchained forces of destruction. Yet the ruddy light glowed on the faces of the firemen who, though driven back steadily inch by inch, as the fire ate its way forward, were carrying on the conflict with unflagging energy. Torrents of water were hurled on the flames, only to dissolve in steam indistinguishable amid the uprolling clouds of smoke.

Glancing about him, the young man observed a

THE FIRE

policeman standing guard over some property that had been saved from the building. Making his way thither, he espied Gav bringing some papers and books which the boy was adding to the pile of articles already accumulated.

"Well, Gav," he exclaimed, "this is a bad business. What have you rescued?"

"Mr. Woodford, is that you? I'm glad you've come. I've been trying to save all the things I thought were specially valuable in the office and library. I think most of your papers are here."

"You are an excellent boy. Have you been to my bedroom?"

"No, not yet. Everybody was away when the fire began. So there was no one here but myself who knew what to save."

"We'll try the bedroom now. I have some things there that I don't want to lose."

When they reached the front of the house, they were warned by a fireman that it was no longer safe to enter.

"I must risk it," said Dayton. "I'll make one trial. I can jump out of the window if I'm shut off from the stairway. The ground is soft hereabouts. You stay below, Gav, and catch what I throw you."

When he entered, he found it hard to believe that only a few feet away raged the flames which would shortly consume what was left of his house. There was hardly even an odor of smoke, and only a slight crackling and murmur told of the fiery furnace beyond the walls and closed doors that for the time protected the front portion of the building. He hastened upstairs and went into his bedroom. It was

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

quite dark inside. So he lighted a wax candle which he knew where to find in a drawer. Then he gathered together the little articles which had been given him by his mother in the long-vanished years. These he rolled up in some of the bedclothes, and by a strong knot made the bundle secure enough to toss down to Gav. He took in his hands a photograph of his mother as a beautiful girl, which he cherished above all else. There were besides two or three little keepsakes that he carefully brought away. During the interval the fire had been making rapid progress. The connecting doors were giving way, thus revealing fierce vistas of flame beyond. Smoke was quickly filling the rooms. Dayton felt it wise to withdraw. He hurried down the stairway, and, passing outside, handed his treasures to Gav, warning him to be very careful of them. Immediately behind him came three or four neighbors who had been trying to rescue a few valuables from the lower rooms.

"We hadn't time to do much," said one, "but we thought that you might like to have a few little things saved."

Dayton thanked them for what they had done.

"I suppose there is no hope now except in the tender mercies of the insurance appraiser," he said, smiling.

The firemen ordered everybody, even Dayton, away. The heat was becoming almost intolerable. The whole upper story was in flames, and the fire was rapidly working its way downward to the still untouched portion of the building.

"We'll not save a board," Dayton heard one fireman say to another. "We're being badly beaten."

The zone of danger now rapidly widened. Though

THE FIRE

the grounds about the residence were extensive, a strong wind which had just risen drove the fire across to one of the neighboring houses. Fierce gusts swept avalanches of burning material high in the air and scattered it far afield. As the main business portion of the city was at no great distance, Royaltown became seriously alarmed. The light of the flames shone on a vast mass of humanity crowded together in the adjacent streets. The whole fire-fighting force of the city was by this time at work. Yet the situation became every moment more grave. Requests for help had been telegraphed to the neighboring towns and cities. Special trains were already on their way, bearing men and equipment from a half-dozen different points.

At last, however, events began to take a favorable turn. The new fires that had broken out were quenched. Within the broken walls of Dayton's house the flames began to die down for want of fresh material. The firemen, as the heat abated, were able to work with effectiveness and make sure that the conflagration should not exceed its original limits. Even the wind seemed to be lessening in violence.

The crowd, which had been very quiet while the danger was at its height, began now to notice and enjoy the various incidents that are bound to occur on such occasions. A hydrant was suddenly opened, and inadvertently drenched a stylishly-dressed young man who had been trying to attract the attention of some pretty girls. A man's hat was blown off and was immediately impaled on the foot of a fireman who happened to be running up behind. A girl crossing an open square on which burning embers were raining thickly, received one all aglow upon her hat.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

This flamed up in a moment, was pulled off her head by her companion, and was thrown away, a sad wreck of a once fairy creation. But the laughter of the observers was always good-natured, and even the victims appeared to take their misfortunes smilingly as being part of the "show."

Dayton stood for a while talking with the policeman who was guarding his goods. But finally he was discovered by Smith, Morris, William and others of his friends.

"You will come over and stay with us for the present, will you not?" asked Morris. "We should be delighted to put you up."

"Thank you very much, Roy, for your kind offer. But I think I shall establish myself at the "Royal Edward" for a day or two at least, as it is so near at hand.

Morris would have liked to press his invitation, but Dayton said that he might have to tax the generosity of the judge's family in other ways during the somewhat trying period that would follow.

The question of residence being thus settled for the time being, Dayton's friends undertook at once the necessary work of the moment. Morris went over to the hotel to engage a suite of rooms. William looked for the chauffeur. As Dayton's motor-car had been saved, it was used to transport to the hotel the more precious portion of his goods. Gav and his father, Dave Malton, carried the rest to a neighbor's house. Dayton, in the midst of his difficulties, could hardly forbear smiling when he saw the retired burglar assisting to remove his property to a place of safety.

THE FIRE

When he arrived at the hotel, he was amused to discover that an American flag had been placed by Morris over the main door, to show whither his headquarters had now been transferred. On going up to his rooms, he found a number of prominent citizens already there. He recognized the mayor, several aldermen, the police magistrate, Judge Morris, and many others. He was now well acquainted in Royal-town, and most of these men were quite good friends of his. All expressed great regret at his misfortune. Dayton laughed, said that he was trying to look on the bright side, and that he expected the insurance to make good a fair proportion of the financial loss, and thanked them for their kindness in expressing such warm sympathy. He asked Gav to secure the best cigars the hotel afforded, and to supply the company with the same.

When the dignitaries, official and unofficial, had lighted up, the conversation became general. Smith was complimented and rallied at the same time on the success of his ruse in the Opera House.

"I always regarded you as a smart man," said the mayor, "but you certainly surpassed yourself this evening. I saw you talking to the boy. Was he the one who brought you the news?"

"Yes," answered Smith, "he is one of the messengers in the office who had instructions to come at once to tell me, if anything important turned up. I fancied that, if I could get the crowd laughing, there would be no further danger. I felt that, under the circumstances, Mr. Woodford would pardon me for speaking of his misfortune in such an unfeeling way."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Don't you think, Mr. Mayor," remarked one of the aldermen, "that there should be a by-law against people shouting in front of a crowded hall?"

"I have been inquiring about that disturbance outside the building," replied the mayor, "and I understand that a slight accident happened to a hose-reel, as it was passing. During the minute or so that the firemen were detained a crowd gathered round them, and some boys in it were responsible for the shouting. It is hardly a thing that would often occur. Still, it would be no harm to have some kind of regulation prohibiting unnecessary noises immediately in front of public halls while an entertainment or other meeting is in progress. Perhaps there is one already. You never know how many laws and ordinances you are breaking till you begin to read the statute books."

"That's right, mayor," said Judge Morris. "All last winter I consistently broke that precious snow by-law of yours, and I have since wondered what effect it would have had upon the popular conception of the principles of justice if I had been brought before my friend Days here and sentenced to one dollar and costs or thirty days in the common jail. Ordinary citizens might think that, if the judiciary cannot keep the laws, they themselves should be excused if they occasionally lapse from the path of rectitude."

"The chief of police had his eye on you, judge, but we did not think it wise to do anything. We respected your lack of knowledge of the law, and besides, Briefer, our new city solicitor, was not quite sure that the old thing was drawn up in such a way as to stand the test of the courts. He is now at work

THE FIRE

drafting a new snow by-law, which he thinks it will not exceed our powers as a municipality to enact and enforce. So you had better look out when the snow gets deep next winter."

There was a general laugh at the judge's expense. But Judge Morris joined in it quite as heartily as his friends. He was one of those rare men who enjoy a joke equally well whether it is upon themselves or upon somebody else. He was a sound man at heart, with a good digestion and with optimistic views in spite of a somewhat grim exterior. It was hard to realize that he was older than any of those present who were still engaged in active affairs.

At this point Gav came in with a message for Dayton that some ladies wished to see him. He followed the boy's guidance, and was delighted to meet a number of his best friends among the gentler sex, Lotta, Flava, Estelle Morris, and Constance. They all expressed their regret at the great loss that had befallen him.

"To think," said Lotta, "that we were talking together such a short time before without having the slightest premonition of what was coming!"

"Father sends word," said Flava, "that he places our entire establishment at your disposal. But I learn from Roy Morris that you have made up your mind to be very independent, and cannot be dissuaded. If, however, you should at any time relent, remember that our house is at your command."

"I cannot express sufficiently my appreciation of the kindness of all my friends. I wish you to tell Mr. Sheldon how much I esteem his generous offer. But at present I shall content myself with the moderate accommodation of the hotel in order to

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

be near the scene of action, while necessary matters are being attended to."

"You are very obdurate, Mr. Woodford. But if you are not well treated here, you will know where a place of refuge is awaiting you."

After the others Constance spoke to him. She looked very beautiful in spite of traces of suffering that were plain to Dayton's eyes. What could be the nature of the bond by which she and Charters were held together? Dayton now knew that neither of them was bound by any tie of affection to the other. He wondered if Constance was aware that there existed a possibility of her release from the abhorred association with the man.

"I am so sorry for your loss," were the simple words that Constance used.

"You know, Miss Lyman, how I appreciate your sympathy. I am thankful the matter has been no worse. No one has been injured, and the fire was mastered before it made much headway elsewhere. There might so easily have been a great calamity."

"You always look on the bright side, Mr. Woodford. I have tried to learn that lesson as well."

Dayton recognized the dull pain of prolonged suffering beneath the words.

All the ladies now turned to go, with reiterated assurances of their sympathy. Dayton, being a normal young man, could not fail to be particularly affected by the kindness of his best-loved friends of the opposite sex, expressed as it was in gracefully spoken words.

Later his male visitors also took their departure, with the exception of William, Morris, Smith and Stephens. The last-named person represented the *Polar Star*.

THE FIRE

"Now, my dear confrère," said Smith, "let us secure all the information we can from Mr. Woodford. We can draw up our reports together before we go."

"Agreed, Smith, but I want to finish this cigar. Really this is the best smoke I have had for a week. I did not believe the "Royal Edward" could supply such a brand on short notice. Mr. Woodford deserves the best possible treatment from the press."

Mr. Stephens was a somewhat older man than Smith. The *Polar Star* was the oldest paper in the county, and had been founded by Mr. Stephens' father. The *Earth and Mars* was an upstart beside it, and had owed its success almost wholly to the untiring energy of Smith.

The statement of the amount of the insurance was easily secured. Then they wrestled with the question of the origin of the fire. Gav was called in and thoroughly questioned. He did not know much. He had been reading the "Adventures of Texan Joe" in Mr. Woodford's study, when he heard some people shouting on the street. A policeman had seen the flames bursting out of one of the back windows, and had rung in an alarm to the fire department. Gav had run out, discovered what was wrong, and set about saving what he thought was most valuable. All the other servants were absent at the time, many of them being at the entertainment in the Opera House, for which Mr. Woodford had provided them with tickets. Gav could assign no cause for the fire.

"Let us try the old standby, 'something wrong with the electric wiring,'" said Stephens. "You had electric light, I believe, Mr. Woodford?"

"It is better to say that than nothing," replied

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Smith. "To put down the origin as unknown is too much like casting a reflection on the omniscience of the press."

"Well, we have that down. Now, who is to be allowed to use the term 'devouring element?'"

"Let us flip a copper to decide," suggested Smith.

"All right," said Stephens. "Here's the latest from the mint. You will kindly perform the act."

"The countenance of the Seventh Edward shall beam for the *Polar Star*, and the 'one cent' shall represent the fortune of the *Earth and Mars*."

The copper flew up.

"You win, Stephens. I hope you've saved a dictionary, Mr. Woodford, for I must find something to help me out."

Under the energetic scratching of pencils the reports quickly progressed. Finally Smith said to Dayton, "I think Stephens and I have now all the information we need, and we'll not keep you out of bed any longer."

He looked at his watch.

"It will be daylight in an hour. I shall not go to bed till everything is ready for the press. I suppose that will be your course of action, too, Stephens. I am thankful that it makes no difference to me at what time I sleep, so long as I put in a sufficient number of hours under the quilts. Good night or good morning, Mr. Woodford. A similar expression of departure to you, Mr. Ellson, and to you, Mr. Morris. By the way, when are you going back to 'Varsity?'"

Smith made a note of Morris' answer. Mr. Stephens meanwhile formally bade adieu, thanking

THE FIRE

Dayton for the information that had been given. The two journalists then went off together.

"They are very good friends," remarked Morris, "though they may pummel each other in print in the interest of their daily circulation."

Dayton noticed that Gav was still in the room.

"Gav, you have worked hard," he said. "It is high time that you were in bed. You may go now, and do not get up till you feel ready. You deserve the warmest praise for all that you have done to-night."

Gav's face lighted up. He thanked his employer and left the room.

"Mr. Woodford, we'll leave you to your repose," said Morris. "William is coming across to our house. Lotta is spending the night with Estelle."

"I do not feel inclined to sleep after all this excitement. If you have no objection, I shall accompany you across the town. By the time I am back it will be daylight."

So the three set out from the hotel. The wind, after a temporary lull, had sprung up with renewed violence. There was promise of a wildly tempestuous day. But the young men enjoyed its buffets, and arrived at the judge's house in the best of spirits. In spite of a most urgent invitation Dayton did not go in.

"I am better outside," he said, "until I work the excitement out of my blood."

So he immediately began the long walk back. Passing near the railway station, he noticed that the early morning train was just coming in. Idly he wondered if there might be somebody on board whom

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

he knew, and just as idly he walked over to find out. To his surprise the towering form of Pauline Grandis descended from a car. She at once perceived him.

"You are evidently the early bird, Mr. Woodford. Am I to be the little worm who is to suffer?"

Dayton failed to understand with what justification she used the word "little."

"We will hope that the situation is not so tragical," said he, "or we may suppose that your luggage is the worm. Allow me to attend to it."

He saw that this was properly despatched to the aunt's residence.

"Would you care to walk over with me, Mr. Woodford? It is not far, and I think we can easily get there in spite of this terrible wind. Fortunately, it will be at our backs. I want to talk to you, and I may not have a better chance."

Her companion wondered if Mr. Charters was to be put in the corner at last. But she did not immediately broach the important subject.

"I was very much surprised to set eyes on you, Mr. Woodford. I thought that I might slip into Royaltown, and nobody would be the wiser. You must keep good hours to be able to rise so early."

"Do not think of praising me for my early rising. It has been easy, for I have been up all night."

"Really, Mr. Woodford?"

"Yes, my house was burned last night."

"Not that beautiful house! How sorry I am!"

"Behold me now a homeless wanderer, deserving of pity!"

"It is quite too bad. But you have lots of friends

THE FIRE

who will be kind to you. I am at your service, as well as the others."

"I am very grateful, Miss Grandis. Everybody has been truly kind to me in my extremity."

"As we are friends, Mr. Woodford, I am going to give you some private and confidential information. You got my telegram?"

"Yes, and I fancy that I unravelled correctly its mystery."

"It was so tiresome. I was sitting in that poky station at the junction. There was not a thing to do. A few mildly amusing events occurred. A half tipsy man wanted to buy a ticket to somewhere at a reduced price. The ticket agent said the fare was forty cents. The man offered him a quarter. The ticket man rejected the offer. The argument became hot. I don't know how it was finally settled. An opera troupe was also waiting for the train. The ladies especially seemed in bad humor. A poor man knocked down one of their parcels from a seat, and was scolded unmercifully for his awkwardness. I was sorry for him, and then began to be sorry for myself. Finally, I made up my mind to do something. I noticed the telegraph office, and I had an inspiration. I spent half an hour writing out that telegram. I thought you might be interested to know about things. I had to go home for a few days. Now I am coming back to stay just two weeks. I may as well confess to you that I am not rich. In fact, to tell the truth I am rather poor, and I am tired of working for a living. This, of course, is between you and me and the gatepost. I am not over-head-and-ears in love with Mr. Charters, but

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

if he can make up his mind as to whether he is really in love with me or only thinks he is, I know what I shall do. Can you blame me, Mr. Woodford?"

"You have used your sex's privilege of being enigmatical, Miss Grandis."

"You know I mean what I told you before, when we were up on the Mountain, that I was going to put the matter plainly before Mr. Charters, and he had to choose between Miss Lyman and me. It is certainly not right to allow matters to go on much longer as they are. So we shall discover soon whether this secret engagement will last."

"Do you think that anybody besides ourselves knows about this strange engagement?" asked Dayton, quickly. He could not help feeling angry, as he thought of the way in which Constance was involved in this wretched business. What was the mystery that was behind it all?

"No, nobody except ourselves. I can keep a secret, though I am a woman. I have learned how, or else I should have been driven to the wall long ago."

"Will you promise always to keep this one, no matter how affairs may turn out?"

"Yes, I promise, Mr. Woodford."

Having thus done what he could to protect Constance, he bade good-bye to the Amazonian lady at the door of her aunt's house,

CHAPTER XVI.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

By the time Dayton reached the hotel, it was already the breakfast hour. He debated with himself as to whether he should retire to his room, give orders not to be disturbed, and endeavor to recover his lost sleep, or whether he should have breakfast and postpone his arrears of slumber till the evening. As he did not feel in the least drowsy, he was somewhat inclined to decide in favor of the latter alternative. While thus engaged in meditating, he had been standing before a large window in the front of the hotel. Outside the wind was becoming more and more violent, as the time passed. Fierce gusts were sweeping clouds of dust along the street. The air was full of whirling bits of paper and other light material.

Next to the hotel there happened to be a vacant lot, upon which had been thrown all sorts of old articles from a neighboring tinshop. The æsthetic eye of Royaltown had long been pained by the presence of a large collection of decrepit pots, pans and kettles. Suddenly the wind seized upon this and swept it into the street. Dayton's eye was attracted by the unusual commotion. In the midst of the domestic boilers and tea kettles he noticed bowling merrily along a human hat. He could not help smiling at the misfortune of the unseen owner, who he was sure would not be far behind. Almost instantly

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

came into view a stout gentleman, who was pursuing the runaway at top speed. But the hat seemed to be fond of its liberty and eluded capture on several occasions. Once Dayton feared for its utter destruction, for the owner seemed squarely to put his foot on it. But, lo! like the historic flea, the hat was not there when the foot descended. The race was on again. Darting in towards the curb, swinging out to the middle of the roadway, rushing between the feet of horses, brushing coquettishly the skirts of ladies, the hat pursued its way. But at last it was brought up against a telegraph post and remained long enough for a boy to capture it. The stout gentleman took it, dusted it with his handkerchief, and set it firmly upon his head. He gave the boy a nickel, and turned back in the direction of the "Royal Edward," which he reached without mishap. As he entered he noticed Dayton, who had remained standing at the window.

"That was a nice little sprint I had after my lid," he remarked. "But it was good exercise, and I feel the better for it." He was still panting, and found it difficult to utter the words.

"All's well that ends well," said Dayton. "You have been quite successful."

"Yes, I know how to stick to a job when I start. I would have followed the thing to Jericho or died *en route*. I'll freshen up a bit, and then I'll have breakfast."

A few minutes later he returned and spoke cordially to Dayton.

"Have you had breakfast yet?"

"No, I am not sure that I shall take any."

"Bad business that. Breakfast ought to be the

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

best meal of the day. All the doctor books and patent medicine ads. say that. I should be glad to have you come in with me, if you have no objection."

Dayton thought that he might as well accompany his cheerful acquaintance. They entered the dining-room.

"This is my favorite table over here," Dayton was informed. "I know the waitress. She will give us the best service. She is a fine girl and a good-looker."

Although Dayton had learned by experience that it was well to be distrustful when any person professed to know the dignitaries that preside at hotels, restaurants and other places where one's bodily comfort is ministered to, he was pleasantly disappointed in the present case. The waitress did really seem prepared to do her special best for them.

"What's on the bill of fare, Gladys?" asked the stout gentleman. "I can't read this morning. Besides, I like to hear your charming voice enumerate the good things that I am about to enjoy."

The young woman ran over the list so rapidly that it was difficult to make out the details.

"There, there now, more slowly, Gladys! I have been chasing my hat almost ever since I arose this morning, and I am not equal to mental gymnastics."

As the list was more slowly repeated, a suitable selection was made. Dayton gave his order at the same time, and the waitress retired. The stout gentleman now suggested that they introduce themselves.

"My name is Robert T. Rogers, and I am a traveler, a knight of the grip, or in popular parlance a

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

drummer. My line is dry goods. I come out to this town two or three times a year. The house I represent has a number of good customers here."

"I am Dayton Woodford. I have been living in Royaltown a short time only."

"That was quite a fire we had last night. Gave the folks a scare. The house belonged to a rich American lawyer, I was told. I did not get his name."

"It was my house, Mr. Rogers."

"That so? Tremendously sorry, Mr. Woodford. Hope you carried plenty of insurance."

"Yes, there was a fair-sized insurance on it. I inherited it from my aunt, who died recently. I regretted its loss because of its associations. She had lived in it the greater part of her life."

"Insurance companies can't insure the sentimental side, where is always the biggest loss in the burning of a home. What was the cause of the fire?"

"Nobody seems to know. I was absent at the time."

"Like so many things, it just happened, I suppose. Some careless servant likely left something to smoulder convenient to something inflammable."

"Whatever was the cause, Mr. Rogers, there is no advantage in crying over spilled milk."

"Are you going to rebuild?"

"I am not sure. I have received some offers for the sale of the place for business purposes. Now that the house is gone, these offers will probably be renewed. It is hardly a suitable locality for a residence at the present time. I am inclined to sell. I have another house, which has recently become vacant. I could live in that."

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

"You evidently have houses to burn. Excuse the ancient joke, Mr. Woodford. Having but one house to shelter the old lady and myself, I should have trouble if my domicile went up in smoke. Did you save any furniture?"

"Not much, chiefly a few little things that I specially valued."

The waitress now brought breakfast. Mr. Rogers gave conclusive proof of the excellence of his appetite.

"Have you been long at your business?" asked Dayton.

"I have been over fifteen years on the road. I am no longer in the first bloom of youth, as you see. It is a hard life in some ways, but it has its pleasant side as well. It will make a man either cheerful and philanthropic or morose and a hater of mankind. If he develops in this latter way, he had better quit the business. I have been pretty successful on the whole. But there are some men who have a genius for making sales. I once knew a young fellow who could sell anything to anybody. He could have sold baby carriages to bachelors and gramophones to the deaf and dumb. I remember one story that is told about him before he had a position with a regular house. He happened to be hard up and started out to sell combs and hairbrushes to the populace. At one house he was met by a bald-headed man. 'There's nothing in your outfit that's of any use to me,' said the person without the hair. 'Now, isn't there?' said my friend. 'Here's a fine-tooth comb that you may find useful.' 'Not much!' said the other. 'There are no jungles on my head to hide big game.' 'Better try one for good luck. You are

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

using a hair restorer, are you not?' The fact was admitted. 'Well, then, I'll give you one. You can put it up the way people used to hang up a horse-shoe.' 'Thank you,' said the bald-headed man, 'I will.' 'Now,' said my friend, 'The lucky number has always been seven since the days of the ancient Jews. I'll sell you six others at a reduction, if you will take them.' There is always a grain of superstition in people when dealing with such doubtful matters as speculation in stocks or the resurrection of hair. So the six combs were bought at the supposed reduction, which constituted a good profit for my friend. One can imagine the seven placed upon the wall and forming an ornamental design in the fond hope that some day the trump will sound, and it will be proclaimed that baldheadedness shall be no more."

After a little further conversation as to the magic skill possessed by some of Mr. Rogers' friends, the two men rose from the table, and soon left the hotel to take up their duties for the day. Dayton had been much diverted by the drummer's talk and resolved to cultivate his acquaintance, if any opportunity offered during the next few days.

Having received a note from Flava, inviting him to dinner that evening, the appointed hour brought him to the door of the Sheldon residence, which was situated in the most aristocratic part of Royaltown. On being admitted, he found himself in the presence not only of Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon and their daughter, but also of a stranger, who was introduced as Mr. Starr. A moment later Roy Morris entered. Flava took advantage of the slight diversion to step over

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

to Dayton and ask, "Do you remember the story of the boy, the girl and the raft?"

"I do," said Dayton.

"That's him," said Flava. "Don't let the grammar disturb you."

"Has the story turned out as it should?" asked Dayton.

"It has. Don't you see it in my eyes?"

"Your eyes are shining like stars," answered Dayton.

"How dreadful! I have a good mind not to speak to you again until you promise to reform."

Dinner was now announced. Mr. Sheldon was somewhat a lover of the magnificent, and so what would elsewhere have been a simple meal here became an elaborate repast. Dayton seized an opportunity to thank his host and hostess for their kind offer to "give shelter to the homeless."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Woodford," said Mr. Sheldon. "We have plenty of room for you here. Only that this is a free country, or I should have been inclined to use some friendly force, and compel the homeless to come in. How are they treating you at the 'Royal Edward'?"

"Pretty well. I shall, however, be there only a short time. I have decided to move into a house that I own on Whitney Avenue. It is next door to Judge Morris'."

"Yes, I know the house. That's the one Fairfax occupied. He has just moved out, hasn't he?"

"Yes, his new house is finished. It is lucky that I have made no arrangements for leasing the place to anybody else."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"What are you going to do with the lots where your former house stood? That must be a valuable property."

"I have decided to sell. I received two offers for it to-day."

"I'll make you a third. I don't want to go above a certain amount. So I suppose I shan't get it. But you'll hear from me to-morrow."

"Why, father, are you and Mr. Woodford talking business?" exclaimed Flava. "On social occasions gentlemen may talk business only with ladies."

"We are only talking of talking business," said her father. "So we are not guilty. But I never heard before that there was any exception in the case of ladies."

"Why, the most important business of life is occasionally considered by them while a social event is in progress."

Everybody laughed.

"But sometimes this occurs in mid-lake," remarked Mr. Sheldon, meaningly.

"No, you are wrong this time, father. He was then thinking only of saving the poor girl's life."

Mr. Starr was in deep conversation with Mrs. Sheldon, and, therefore, his corroboration was not available.

A little while after Morris was asked when he was returning to the university.

"I am going out to-night," he said.

"I hope you are not working too hard," cautioned Mrs. Sheldon. "Students frequently overstudy."

"I am doing only an average amount of work," replied Morris. "But my chum is a pretty busy man. He is the business manager of the college

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

paper, and he is conducting a lively campaign to increase its circulation."

"How is he doing it?" asks Dayton.

"He has opened a number of coupon contests in connection with which prizes are given. For instance, there is a contest of popularity to discover who is the favorite co-ed."

"What is the prize?" asked Flava.

"A free scholarship allowing the winner to select a hat from the studio of a milliner who advertises in the paper."

"How nice," said Flava. "Are many voting?"

"The ballots are coming in in shoals," answered Morris.

"And the other schemes?" asked Mr. Sheldon.

"They are competitions to secure the worst limericks treating of the various colleges, the best historical poem not exceeding one thousand lines, and the largest consumption of a particular kind of breakfast food advertised in the journal's columns. The prizes are: For breakfast food consumption, a pair of dumb-bells and a weighing machine; for the historical poem, one hundred cents, and for the limericks ten scholarships entitling the holders to a year's free washing at a Chinese laundry that is advertising."

"Have you seen any of the poems?" asked Dayton.

"I have. They are in the blankest verse, and are too awful for words. Kindly make no further mention of them."

"Do you remember any of the limericks?" asked Flava. "I have a secret liking for that ancient form of verse."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

“Here is one that deals with the Medical College:

“‘There once was a freshman of Med.,
Who met a charming co-ed.
He meant but to dally,
Yet soon could not rally,
And quickly was won and was wed.’

“This is one having reference to the College of Science:

“‘There once was a freshman of Univ.,
Who blacked in defiance
His boots on the Sabbath.
He was caught in the bath,
And soaked by the Sunday Alliance.’

“These are about some of the Arts Colleges:

“‘There once was a freshman of Univ.,
Who came from the township of Dunniff,
And the pater wrote in
To the Pres. and the Prin.
To meet at the station the son of.

“‘There once was a freshman of Trin.,
Who thought that a grin was a sin;
And he lost all his love
For the excellent Prov.,
When the latter said, smiling, “Come in.”’”

“When you tell about these things, Mr. Morris,” remarked Dayton, “you inspire me with a homesick feeling for the old halls of my alma mater.”

“Yes, one may not realize it at the time,” said Mr. Starr, “but after all the years at college are probably the jolliest one ever spends. The friends that one makes are of the truest kind.”

Soon after dinner Morris had to bid good-bye in order to catch his train. Upon his departure Flava said, “I am going to talk business.”

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

Her father pretended to be frightened.

"I don't think Mr. Woodford will mind," she continued. "The whole matter is that I should like Mr. Starr, who is a lawyer, to practice here. He protests strongly. Now I want Mr. Woodford to aid me in the task of persuading the obstinate."

"I am not very obstinate," said Mr. Starr. "I am very willing to be persuaded, if I can see a good opening."

"I am sure," said Flava, "that an opening will present itself. Perhaps Mr. Woodford has himself plans of settling here."

"I shall probably after a time establish myself in a modest way. I might invite Mr. Starr to join me, but it would not be well for two rich men to form a partnership, for there would be nobody to do the hard work. I have become wealthy through no fault of my own, and I am not yet sure what effect riches may have upon me."

"I am afraid, Mr. Woodford," said Mr. Starr, "that you are making a mistake. I am poor, deplorably poor. If that is the only requisite, I should suit excellently."

Dayton looked at Flava.

"Allow me to answer that look," exclaimed the young lady. "Mr. Starr has to support me when we are married. He may dream of a golden future if he likes. But for the time being I shall be the wife of a struggling lawyer. Isn't that the way it is to be, father?"

"You may have it that way, if you choose," answered her father. "I also may add that you can have it otherwise, whenever you wish."

"No, father, you are not going to spoil my hus-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

band by making him wealthy. I know what it is to be poor. Mother knows, too. And we were happy then, if I remember rightly, quite as happy as we are now."

"I can imagine how my fair daughter will feel, when she leaps from the lap of luxury into the back kitchen to do the baking, scrubbing, washing and ironing."

"I invite you all to taste a complete meal of my own cooking, when the happy time comes that I shall be mistress of a modest household."

"Everybody accepts," returned her father. "But you must begin to take lessons at once, for we desire to survive the ordeal in good health."

Flava made vigorous protestations as to her knowledge of housekeeping. Then turning to Dayton, she said, "You now know the situation. What do you advise?"

"That Mr. Starr join me and keep me from idling by showing me the example of a hard-working lawyer."

"Bravo, Mr. Woodford! You are an excellent person to call to one's assistance. Now, my dear boy," she said, addressing Mr. Starr, "there is not a shadow of a reason for your continuing to bury yourself in that far-away place where you now are. Everybody knows Mr. Woodford, and I can see in my mind's eye already a long waiting list of clients in the offices of Messrs. Woodford and Starr."

"This is quite unexpected, Mr. Woodford," said Mr. Starr. "It is very generous of you to be willing to associate your name with that of an entire stranger. I hope it will not be impossible for me to play my part as a hard-working lawyer."

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

"This matter has been delightfully settled," said Flava. "Mr. Woodford, you are not going to be allowed to stay any longer at that hotel. You *must* move over here until your future residence is ready for occupation. Father will see that your most immediately necessary belongings are brought here tonight. Meanwhile, mother and I are going to keep you and show you the rooms that you are to occupy. We will not accept a refusal, will we, mother?"

Hard pressed on all sides by friendly invitations, Dayton was compelled to capitulate. He telephoned to Gav to pack up the articles that were in his bedroom. Mr. Sheldon went over to the hotel in his car and brought back the boy and the luggage.

True to their promise the ladies conducted Dayton through the magnificent apartments that were assigned to him. The Sheldons were certainly lovers of the luxurious, as was evident at every step. Dayton had never occupied such palatial quarters in his life. Indeed, he felt somewhat embarrassed amid their splendor.

When Gav and he were left alone, the young man amused himself by trying to discover what the effect of the rich surroundings was upon the lad's mind.

"What do you think of this, Gav?" he asked.

"Gee! this is great, Mr. Woodford."

"I am surprised at your lack of originality, Gav. Do you not know that the word 'great' is exclusively claimed, copyrighted and patented by Mr. Charters. All rights reserved and hands off."

"I never heard that duck Charters spout, but he's a blinking dumpling in his looks. This is a corker of a place, Mr. Woodford."

"Gav, your language must be attended to. Let

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

us translate your remarks into the authorized version of the English tongue as a preliminary lesson. Repeat after me: 'I have never heard that chap Charters talk,' or better, 'Mr. Charters.' But he is, —what do you mean by a 'blinking dumpling?'"

"A fat little guy who rubbers up at you when he talks."

"It is worse with you than I thought. Say 'A little man who gazes up at you.' Now we shall return to our original sentence. Translated it runs thus: 'He is an amusing little man who gazes up at you when he talks.' What do you mean by a 'corker' of a place, Gav?"

"Why, a jim dandy of a place!"

"That will never do. You must say that this is a very beautiful, a very gorgeous or splendid place. Do you think that you can learn this new language, Gav?"

"I'll try, but I'll find it pretty hard. The other way of talking is more natural."

"Yes, it probably is for us all. The literary language will soon be as dead as Latin or Greek."

The next evening Dayton called on Constance. He found her quite alone. Even her constant attendant, Grace Malton, was not with her. Mrs. Malton was not very well, and her daughter had gone home to stay with her for the night.

Dayton had noticed that Constance was growing steadily thinner and paler, as time passed. What could be the cause of the great increase of suffering thus revealed? It hardly seemed possible that Charters' wavering fidelity, if known at all to his affianced bride, would inspire intense sorrow. Any feeling of pique that might arise would express itself under

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

far different form. Dayton had long ago given up in despair all attempts to solve the enigma of the unnatural betrothal. Yet there was an easily guessed solution of which he was to receive a hint the following day from an entirely unexpected quarter.

As soon as he met Constance, Dayton became conscious of a lessened resistance on her part towards him. There is a strange sort of wireless telegraphy between the sexes, and when the souls of two lovers become attuned, the responses are wonderfully quick and accurate. He retained the hand that she held out in welcome, and sat down beside her.

"Constance," he said, "I am alarmed. You are certainly unwell."

"No, no, Dayton, I am in good health."

"Surely you are but a ghost of your former self."

"I think it must be your fancy that deceives you."

"I still hold to my opinion, Constance, that you are not well."

They remained silent for a long time. He pressed the delicate fingers softly in his strong hand. The steady stream of dispatches couched in love's code told him of the slow relaxing of her soul's power. At last—it was impossible to say how it came about—she lay motionless in his arms. He kissed her again and again on brow and cheek and mouth. She lay absolutely passive, neither assenting nor refusing. Her eyes were closed. Suddenly the lids half opened, and a delicious tremor of happiness seemed to pass through her frame. Then all at once she raised herself up, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him passionately.

"I am without shame," she said.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Oh, my beloved," cried Dayton. "If you will but listen, I shall carry you out of here in a moment, and we are off on the wings of the wind to other lands, where this black shadow of affliction shall forever be forgotten."

"No, no, Dayton, no! Your words recall me. I cannot flee. My duty is here. I have been weak, unbelievably weak, but now I am strong again to resist."

"Constance, can you not trust me? I wish to take you from whatever unhappiness is pursuing you."

"Why, Dayton, I do trust you with all my soul!"

"But if you trust me, there is then no obstacle that can be considered for a moment."

Dayton was thinking of Charters' discreditable conduct.

"No, I must stay. It would be impossible for me to go."

No word was spoken for a long time. At last the young man rose to leave. He had so conquered his passion as to recognize aright the nobility of the woman he loved. Whether she was right or wrong, he could not but honor her for this faithful adherence to her duty as she saw it. But events, as he now believed, were so shaping themselves that even she must soon see clearly how self-sacrifice for Charters' sake was like "casting pearls before swine."

He kissed her good-bye. As before, she seemed neither to accept nor to reject the caress of his lips. This inspired him with fresh hope. Constance could not feel herself fully bound by her engagement, or she would certainly not allow the continuance of such intimate relations.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

"I am confident now that I am winning," he said to himself, as he pursued his way homeward. "Good luck to you, Pauline! Make that little bouncer behave in such a way as must utterly destroy the technical bond that still exists between him and Constance."

The following afternoon he met Mr. Rogers on Main Street.

"How are you, Mr. Woodford?" he exclaimed. "Glad to grip your paw again. Have missed you at the 'Royal Edward,' but have learned that you are none the worse for the exchange."

"How long do you intend to remain in town, Mr. Rogers?"

"Am leaving to-night. Business has been first class, and I have written up a bunch of orders that will rejoice the heart of the boss when I arrive at headquarters."

"I am very glad that you have been so fortunate."

"Yes, business is improving wonderfully. We shall soon be having boom times again."

While they had been thus conversing, they had been slowly walking along the street. A number of ladies had met them, and had bowed graciously to Dayton. Mr. Rogers' quick eye did not fail to notice this fact.

"I observe that you are popular with the fair sex, Mr. Woodford, if I may be so bold as to make the remark. I was in my younger days somewhat of a favorite with the ladies myself. I came very near being caught by more than one pair of bright eyes, before I met the old woman and we decided to settle down with each other for better or worse. But there is one thing that I found it wise to avoid carefully,

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

and that was flirtation in its various forms. I had once an experience that taught me the great danger and inconvenience of the practice. One afternoon I had put on my best suit, intending to cut a wide swath on the fashionable thoroughfares of the city. There were a large number of very fine young ladies abroad. By the use of great discretion I succeeded in making the acquaintance of a good-looking girl in quite a stylish rig. She murdered the King's English in an unfortunate way, but in personal appearance she would have been hard to surpass. As we walked together, I was aware that we were creating quite a flutter on the boulevards. Though I met some of the people I knew, and among them a lady to whom I was paying a little attention at the time, I felt that I did not need to be ashamed of my fair companion. But I noticed that this particular young lady laughed immoderately as we passed. Next evening I called upon her at her house, and discovered that the person with whom I had spent such a pleasant afternoon was an employee in the kitchen of the young lady's mother. The affair was better than any you ever saw in the moving pictures."

Just as Mr. Rogers finished this harrowing tale, the form of Mr. Charters came into sight on the other side of the street. The drummer gave a low whistle.

"Why, that's Dick Charters. I didn't know he was here."

"Yes, he is with the Lyman Manufacturing Company."

"Been here long?"

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

"I think not. But as I am a newcomer myself, I am not sure."

"The boss knows Dick Charters all right. I should advise any one to mention the name of the gentleman to him in his quiet moments."

This was interesting news to Dayton. In spite of what Mr. Lyman had said, he had never been inclined to take Charters seriously. In his heart he believed that Constance had been inveigled into an engagement by some unknown means, and had been too honorable to wish to break it, unless Charters proved himself entirely unworthy.

"You surprise me, Mr. Rogers. I had been disposed to regard Mr. Charters in quite a different light."

"Mark my words, Mr. Woodford. Charters is no fool. He is an utter knave. He may really have no social tact and may overwork the word 'great' in his conversation in an effort to say something smart and taking. Or, again, this may be a mask he puts on to deceive the outside world. But just get him manipulating figures in any little business affair, and if you don't find yourself done, yes, done to a turn, my name is not Robert T. Rogers."

"Mr. Lyman, I know, has a very high opinion of Mr. Charters' business capacity."

"If the great Jim Lyman does not in six months talk of the capacity of that scamp Charters in quite a different tone of voice, the treat is on me. I remember when Charters first came to our office. He has the slickest style of working a boss I ever knew or heard of. He leads him to think that there never was and never will be such another all-round hustler

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

as Dick Charters. Why, he was next man to the boss before the fellows in the office had time to wake up and rub their eyes to see what was going on! Then for six months we had Charters served up hot, cold, stewed, and in hash. Nothing was done until Mr. Charters had been asked for his advice. He had his finger in every section of the pie. But at last there was a little surprise one day. Charters asked the boss to allow him a share in the business. The boss did not see the necessity, and intimated as much to Charters. The latter insisted. The boss got on his ear. 'You know you are not quite indispensable here, Mr. Charters,' was what he said. I was next door to the private office, checking off some orders I had brought in, and could hear the whole row. Charters said that his services were now exceptionally valuable to the house, because he had gained a great knowledge of the details of the business. 'Oh, I think we could manage to get on without you,' remarked the boss. 'Perhaps it might be as well if we made the effort.' This brought Charters to the point. 'Not on your life,' said he, or something like that. 'I must have either a certain interest in the business or a few cool thousands.' You can't bluff the boss, and so I expected to see Charters fired out of the office. But no! the little man explained how matters were, and it suddenly dawned on me that to stand a suit with him would bring inconvenience on some of our best customers, and show the head of the firm up as a simpleton of the first water. The boss saw this, too, and Charters, after a lot of haggling, got nearly all the money he had asked for. With this handsome capital he went into stocks. I heard he won for a while. But suddenly the real big men

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

took a hand in the affairs of the market, and the little fellows, whether they were wise or unwise, suffered unless their credit was strong and long enough to stand the strain. Charters, I believe, dropped every dollar he owned. After this I lost sight of him until to-day. The men in the office will be interested in the news, when I tell them."

"I am glad to learn this," said Dayton. "I know Mr. Lyman very well, and I shall endeavor to put him on his guard."

"It won't be any use. Charters will have him hypnotized. If you say anything, you will find that I am right."

After some further conversation on various subjects, Dayton bade good-bye to Mr. Rogers. He received a cordial invitation to visit at that gentleman's house, if he ever was in Montreal.

"The old woman and I will be delighted to see you, and we'll show you the sights of the New York of the North."

Dayton took an early opportunity of speaking to Mr. Lyman regarding Charters.

"I have met," he said, "a person who was acquainted with Mr. Charters before the latter came to Royaltown."

"Ah, that is interesting, Mr. Woodford. I suppose he had formed a high opinion of Mr. Charters' ability."

"To tell the truth, he was rather unfavorably disposed towards Mr. Charters."

"Oh! I suppose a remnant of some former dispute or unpleasantness?"

"No, this person did not seem ever to have had direct dealings with Mr. Charters."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"I may say, Mr. Woodford, that I have heard on several occasions reports from individuals regarding Mr. Charters, and I have rejected them one and all as being made out of whole cloth. Mr. Charters suits me, conducts the business of the company in an exceptionally able manner, and will continue to do so until I am convinced by personal observation that he is unfitted for his post. Of course Mr. Charters has his limitations. Socially he is hardly the man one cares to meet. But deficiencies of this kind can scarcely be considered as impairing his usefulness as a man of business."

Dayton, realizing that Mr. Rogers' words had been prophetic, directed the conversation into other channels. For the first time he thought he recognized in the father some traces of the weakness of character which was so much more clearly marked in the son. This revealed itself on the present occasion in a tendency to shut the eyes to an unwelcome truth, a disposition of which an exceptionally clever trickster like Charters would be likely to reap the full advantage.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ACCIDENT.

WILLIAM'S political prospects became every day more flourishing. He was receiving the support of the influential men and the important newspapers of his party. Some panegyrics from the columns of the latter were copied into the metropolitan dailies. Thus the volume and velocity of the avalanche of popularity that was descending upon him continued to increase.

"There is nothing like politics to bring a man into notoriety," he remarked to his friends.

In the north end of the riding the greatest annual event was a fall fair, which was held in a certain little village at a late date in the season. It was the last open-air gathering before the winter set in, and, consequently, when it was favored with good weather, was attended by an enormous crowd. The whole countryside was present, from Dan to Beersheba. All ages were represented, from Methuselah to the infant prodigy. The village, noted only for its "Exposition," swarmed for the day with humanity, masculine and feminine, arrayed in a magnificence that might have caused even Solomon pangs of jealousy. For the community was well-to-do, and, when it put on its best dress, the finger of scorn might properly be pointed in a different direction.

William, although known by everybody in the south, was comparatively speaking a stranger in the

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

north. Therefore, Smith and the other party managers were anxious to have him introduced to the people at the great fair. His nomination being now assured, the campaign for election might as well begin at once, for the constituency was a close one and every vote counted. Dayton was invited to join the company of the faithful that was going north as William's bodyguard.

The weather was most propitious.

"The last fine day of the season!" exclaimed William. "Elmville fair is famous for its luck in having good weather. Only once in twenty years has snow been known to fall on the date set apart for the event."

On entering the train, Dayton was able to discover who were the party stalwarts that were giving their countenance to William. To his surprise one of the first he observed was no less a person than Mr. Charters.

"Politics makes strange bedfellows," he thought. "If I did not know that Smith, William, and a number of these others are men absolutely above suspicion, I should be afraid of the party that had such a Judas as Charters enrolled among its members."

Mr. Charters was in his best form. If he was worried by the course of his love affairs or by the unkind suspicions of his neighbors, nothing of his anxieties appeared upon the surface. The day was "great," the prospects of the election were "great," an air of "greatness" seemed to amplify his abbreviated figure into temporary ox-like magnitude.

Suddenly Smith remarked, "By the way, Charters, I met a man who used to know you, R. T. Rogers, of Stairs and Company, Montreal."

THE ACCIDENT

"Yes I used to work in that office. Bob Rogers and I were great friends. Stairs and Company are a good firm."

"He says he remembers you very well."

Mr. Charters remained absolutely composed, and the conversation lapsed.

An irresistible temptation came upon Dayton.

"I should like to test your omniscience, Mr. Smith," he said. "Would you kindly give us some information about the moons of Mars?"

Mr. Charters started violently and then became as immobile as before.

"You have had your warning, my dear fellow," thought Dayton.

Smith was observed to chuckle unmeaningly several times in the course of the day.

When the train had swung round the left side of Royal Mountain into the upper valley of the Clearwater, it began to climb by many a twist and turn the side of the great escarpment of which the mountain was an elevated point. The company told stories of the early history of the railway. One of the older men spoke of its construction.

"The engineer who built this road," he said, "was paid by the mile, and they say he made it as crooked as it is in order to get as much mileage out of it as he could. He died of a broken heart after the rails were laid, because he found that there were a hundred of them that were straight."

"Could he not have discovered an easier way up than this?" asked Dayton. "The car is behaving like a ship in the trough of a heavy sea."

"Of course he could, but he wanted to try some of his scientific curves. We are going round the

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

famous 'Horseshoe' now. If you look out of the window you will see across that field the telegraph poles along the part of the track we are coming to. When the line was first built, it was a narrow-gauge road, and the little engines used to dodge in and out around these curves not badly. Of course, they went pretty slow. I remember when it was a common trick for the young fellows to get off the train here, run across the field, and catch it as it climbed the grade. This practice was stopped rather suddenly, when one day an engineer put on steam and left the whole crowd behind."

"Is there not some danger in operating a bad piece of road like this?"

"Yes, there is a good deal, Mr. Woodford. But they have never had a serious accident in the thirty-five years since the railway was built. It is fairly safe travelling just because it is dangerous, for the risk is so plain that everybody is careful."

"That does not change my private opinion," said Smith, "that the road should be rebuilt to meet modern requirements."

"A plank for Ellson's platform," suggested one of the politicians, laughingly.

In the course of his wanderings through the train Dayton came across Dave Malton, in a corner of a smoking compartment.

"Are you going far, Mr. Malton?" he asked.

"Only up to the fair, Mr. Woodford. I am feeling a little restless, and I thought a day off might do me good."

"It certainly will. You have been working very steadily ever since we made our agreement."

"Yes, I have tried to do as well as I could. But

THE ACCIDENT

I feel often as if something were following me up. I have had the feeling very strong of late, and I thought I should run out here for the day, and try to forget it for a while. It won't cost much, for there are cheap rates for the fair."

Dayton cheered the man with some words of encouragement.

On arriving at the fair-grounds, the company found itself in the midst of a scene of extraordinary animation. The exhibits of farm produce, live stock and machinery were the merest pretence. Hardly anybody paid attention to them after the first cursory survey. The crowd came out to see that which is the most interesting of all exhibits, fellow humanity. Further entertainment was provided by innumerable fakirs, who extracted dimes and quarters from the pockets of the people in such a clever way that the losers were delighted to part with their money. The hubbub was terrific. "Come on, gentlemen, try your luck. Have a shot, have a shot. You double and treble your money if you win." Thus throats of iron poured out volleys of sound hour after hour. In the restaurant tents persons of unimaginable internal capacity ate and drank, and drank and ate, unapprehensive of gout or dyspepsia. About the outskirts scurried horses and men, taking part in various races for beast or humanity.

Friends from everywhere met friends from everywhere else. Handshakings and "How-are you's" were exchanged with thousandfold repetition. The intimate news of the countryside was disseminated, the good told openly, the bad in low tones or in whispers, some of it gospel-true, much of it gossip-flavored. Through the midst of this medley passed

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

William, with a local man or two at his elbow. He was introduced as "the coming man," "the progressive statesman," "the son of the soil," "the farmer's friend," "the choice of the people." As was to be expected he made a good impression. At the conclusion of the day Smith and the rest of the faithful were more than ever confident of the party's success in the impending contest. In a fair fight they would win. The only fear now was that the other side might resort to improper means. But as our concern with William's election is only an indirect one, it is not necessary further to enumerate the worries that disturbed the mental tranquillity of the politicians.

Dayton was introduced by Smith to several persons prominent in the district, and was by them most hospitably treated. He made the acquaintance of nearly everybody of importance at the fair. Moreover, as he was a young man, it was thought proper by his entertainers that he should meet numbers of the fair sex. Consequently, he was smiled upon with favor by grandmothers, matrons, spinsters, less mature marriageable persons, sweet opening buds, and babbling feminine infants. "All this," he thought, "is the sort of thing William will have to delight him. It is pleasant to be a man of prominence upon occasion, but my wits would be sore distracted if I had to continue permanently in that condition."

The train to Royaltown in the evening was packed to its full capacity. As it passed out of Elmville, it was noticed by many that the speed was too great for safety, when one considered the nature of the road and the steep down-grade.

"I don't like this," observed Smith. "There

THE ACCIDENT

must surely be a new man at the throttle who doesn't know this line. See how the carriage is pitching about already, and we have not reached the bad curves yet."

"The chances are," said another man, "that if they don't slow her up a bit, we'll be ditched before we are half-way down the hill."

There was a little station at the top of the slope, and here a number of cautious people got off. One man was heard to say, "I value my life too highly to go down that toboggan slide at the rate at which we've been travelling."

The train started again, and when it was found that the same high speed was maintained, most of the passengers began to feel uneasy. William and his friends were in a car pretty well to the rear of the train. Dayton did not see Malton, and conjectured that he was in a car further forward. Charters he noticed was in a seat some distance away, sitting opposite to a large, stout lady, with whom he seemed to be acquainted. He had kept aloof from the rest of the party all day.

The train had now reached the region of greatest danger. The first of the bad curves it passed successfully. Everybody breathed more easily.

"I understand," said one person, "that they have been making better time on this road of late, and so they probably know that there is no danger."

The next curve was the "Horseshoe," so Smith said. They could hear a long whistle from the engine. The train was evidently swinging around. All of a sudden there was a terrific jerk, then a crash, and the car stopped. A fierce sound of escaping steam was heard somewhere. Then arose all kinds of frantic

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

and terrible sounds from frightened or tortured humanity. Dayton picked himself up from the floor, where he had been thrown, and was surprised to find that he was intact. William got off with some bruises. Smith's face was cut a little where he had fallen against something sharp. All these facts were ascertained in an instant. The people in the car began slowly to emerge from the various uncomfortable or dangerous positions into which they had been hurled. Last of all arose Mr. Charters. The stout lady had fallen upon him. Nobody, however, was seriously injured. Even Mr. Charters had escaped as by a miracle.

But it was quite otherwise with the people in some of the cars further forward. These cars had accompanied the engine, which had leaped from the track and was now spurting great volumes of steam in its death agony. They had been almost entirely demolished. It was a marvel that any of their occupants had escaped alive.

The work of rescue was promptly begun. Luckily, darkness had not yet come on, and thus there was nothing to delay the search for the injured. Dayton never forgot the scenes he witnessed amid that tangled mass of debris. He worked heroically with Smith and William, casting from him as well as he could the dreadful sensation of nausea that threatened to overcome him at the sight of the bodies of the living and the dead lying gashed or dismembered. As the work progressed, this feeling almost entirely left him, as all sense of fear leaves the soldier as soon as he finds himself in the thick of the battle. A certain exaltation took possession of him. Ever afterwards he wondered at the strange indifference with which

THE ACCIDENT

he had assisted in removing that bloody human wreckage.

Almost at the last he and William, working together, came upon poor Dave Malton. They raised him up, and, carrying him to a little distance, laid him tenderly on the grass. He opened his eyes. He recognized Dayton and smiled feebly.

"You have been good—very good," he said, with great effort. "What was—following me—has got me. I didn't—mean to do it. I had never—done that before. It was—self-defence. God has forgiven—me."

He said nothing that was intelligible after this, though he revived slightly once or twice. Then quite peacefully he passed away.

The scene at Royaltown station on the arrival of the special relief train was indescribable. A great force of policemen was scarcely able to hold back the anxious people. Though very few persons from Royaltown itself had been killed or injured, rumor had spread abroad the story that almost every one on the train had fallen a victim in the accident. A row of ambulances was waiting to receive the unfortunates. Tenderly were they removed from the train under the watchful eyes of the physicians. But as the uninjured passengers alighted and hastened to join their waiting friends, there was joy unspeakable in many a heart.

Dayton took charge of all arrangements for the burial of Dave Malton. He went at once and broke the news to Mrs. Malton and her children. It was a crushingly heavy blow to them. The father had become so doubly dear to his family since the change in his life, that it seemed almost more than they could

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

bear to lose him so soon and by such a terrible death. Grace, especially, felt the great sorrow with keenness, and it required all her faith in the loving-kindness of Providence to support her through the period of anguish.

On the morning following the great accident, Dayton, who was now staying at Judge Morris' in order to be close at hand to superintend the furnishing of his house, ate breakfast with Estelle and Lotta. The latter was likewise a visitor for a few days.

"How delighted we are to see you safe and sound," said Estelle. Dayton had by this time discovered that she was quite a different sort of girl from the irresponsible butterfly that he had imagined her to be on the occasion of their first meeting.

"We gave William a great welcome," said Lotta, "when he came over last night before going home to the farm, so that we could see that he was quite safe and well. I hugged him and kissed him until he thought I was crazy."

"You make me feel sorry that I did not get back early last night. What might not have happened?"

"It is hard to say, Dayton, but this morning it seems so commonplace and natural to see you there eating your breakfast, that we couldn't grow excited over you, could we, Estelle?"

"You are right, Lotta. And yet what a dreadful thought it is that so many of our friends came near losing their lives on that hateful railway. I suppose, Mr. Woodford, you remained behind to help the injured?"

"No, I was more concerned with the dead. I had to announce the news of poor Dave Malton's fate to his heartbroken family, before the body was brought

THE ACCIDENT

home. They are feeling their great loss very keenly."

"What a thoughtful, noble man you are, Dayton! Do you not think that Estelle and I should go over at once to see Mrs. Malton and Grace?"

"Yes, I do. The poor fellow's death has been so terribly sudden that the blow falls with tenfold force upon the family. You can be of great service to them."

"We shall go as soon as we can get ready, shall we not, Estelle?"

"Yes, Lotta. How could we stay away from them when they are so unhappy?"

At this moment the judge and Mrs. Morris entered. They expressed their pleasure at finding that Dayton had escaped unscathed from the midst of danger.

"A bad, bad business," exclaimed the judge, speaking of the accident. "That's a fearful piece of road. It's like a railway on the ragged edge of Hades."

A servant entered with five or six copies of the *Earth and Mars*. They had been sent up direct from the office with Mr. Smith's compliments, the girl reported.

The papers were passed round the table.

"Smith's a good fellow," said the judge.

"How thoughtful it was to remember us so generously!" exclaimed Mrs. Morris.

All were silent for a time, while they were reading the account of the accident. At last the judge spoke.

"Well, the poor engineer who lost his head, or was drunk or careless or rash, has paid the penalty of his crime or his mistake. 'Scalded to death under

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

his engine,' Smith writes. I see there are some remarks here from you, Mr. Woodford."

"Mr. Smith must have gathered them from my general conversation when we were coming back on the special. I do not remember being interviewed."

"They are very sensible and to the point in any case. Smith is an excellent fellow that way. He has good sense enough not to print a statement in such a manner as will make a fool of a man. I wish all journalists were like him."

"It is all such a terrible thing," said Mrs. Morris, looking up from her paper. "I cannot bear to read any more. It was really as bad as the paper describes, Mr. Woodford?"

"Yes, Mrs. Morris, and worse. I know I shall never forget what I saw and heard. It was beyond words."

"How bravely you have all acted in spite of the awful experiences you were called upon to endure!"

The conversation went on for a little while longer. Then the girls rose from the table.

"Would you care to have me accompany you?" asked Dayton. "I am looking after all matters connected with the funeral, and I should like to see whether the necessary arrangements are being properly carried out."

"We shall be very glad, if you will come with us," said both the girls at once. "We shall make haste to get ready."

When, three-quarters of an hour later, the three young people arrived at the door of the Malton cottage, they were received by a neighbor woman, and were shown into the parlor, where David Malton

THE ACCIDENT

was passing the first strange hours of his calm, eternal sleep.

Grace was on her knees beside the coffin, almost as motionless as her dead father. The girls went over, and, kneeling down one on each side of her, put their arms around her. Lotta began to speak in a soft, wonderful voice that Dayton had never heard her use before. Estelle knelt in sympathetic silence. The scene seemed too sacred for an onlooker, and Dayton was about to leave the room quietly. But Lotta turned at the first movement, and intimated by her glance that she wished him to stay. He caught now and then the low words which she was repeating. They were comforting passages from the New Testament and the Psalms, and were poured out from a memory richly stored from earliest age with all good things through the watchful care of the noblest of mothers. The love of God for the world, the everlasting life—the sweet music of the age-old sentences came to his ears like the soft rhythm of waves on a summer sea. Now the words of a hymn were repeated without hesitation, without mistake. What a magic power of influence had been discovered and trained in this young girl! Dayton wondered if his conception of the ideal human type had not been even surpassed.

It might have been minutes afterward or it might have been an hour, Dayton could not have told, when the three girls arose. There was a look of exaltation in Grace's wan face. Her spirit seemed to have risen above earthly sorrow, like the souls of the happy in Paradise. Such had been the power of Lotta's low-spoken recitation. When she saw Dayton, she smiled

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

gratefully a moment. Then she turned away, leaning on Lotta's shoulder. Suddenly the tears came. Lotta kissed her several times, uttering quiet words. Dayton withdrew.

When he entered the next room—the one in which he had sat on the occasion of his first visit to the house—he observed Mrs. Malton, who was conversing in low tones with a woman of about her own age. She had been crying, but now seemed to be gaining relief by words. Gav and Edith sat very quiet in a remote corner. When the women saw the young man, they half rose, but he bade them remain seated. Mrs. Malton began to thank him almost effusively for the kindness he was showing them in their affliction. But he would not allow her to proceed. Then they talked about the dead man. Mrs. Malton wished to hear the details of his death. Dayton described the scene as well as he could, omitting the worst of its terrible features. She was anxious to know what were his last words, so that she might treasure them up. He repeated only the very last, “God has forgiven me.” The others he did not understand, indeed did not care to remember, judging that they referred to some incident of the man's former life which passed before the mental eye in the moment of death. It was, in truth, forgiven, and should be forgotten. Speak naught but good of the dead! How right it was to obey this rule in the present case!

After having arranged for everything as well as he was able, Dayton took his departure. He did not see the girls till lunch, when he observed that Lotta had a somewhat thoughtful look, but was otherwise unchanged. Dayton felt that he had been privileged

THE ACCIDENT

to take a momentary glimpse into a marvellously endowed nature. The conversation was, however, more serious than usual. No one could entirely shake off the feeling of being quite recently in the in the solemn presence of death.

The funeral took place the next day. Besides many friends and acquaintances of Mrs. Malton and Grace, there were present in more than usual number the regular habitués of houses of mourning, those strange persons who take a pleasure in attending funerals. One man was pointed out as holding the funereal record. He hardly ever missed an occasion of the kind, if the deceased had been known to him in the slightest way. Such constant attendance had made him very useful in looking after little necessary details, such as the placing of sufficient chairs in proper places at suitable times, and other matters of a similar nature.

There was a short, simple service at the house. Dayton, who was with Lotta and Estelle, did not notice Constance till it was almost over. She evidently had come late, for she was standing outside the door, not being able to enter because of the large crowd. Their eyes met, and in the distance her face appeared to Dayton to flush suddenly and then to grow pale again. He fancied that there was almost a look of terror in her eyes. But he could not be sure, because she was standing so far away. He tried to find her, when the crowd moved out, but she had in the meantime become hidden from view, and he did not see her again. On questioning the girls, he was told that they had not observed her. It was evident that she had purposely avoided meeting him. If his observations and suspicions were trust-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

worthy, he was sure that the critical moment was coming for Constance. Perhaps Charters, having made up his mind in her favor, was urging an immediate union. Her look of terror and her avoidance of Dayton would thereby be explained. She was being forced to her doom, and had abandoned all hope.

It may easily be imagined that these reflections raised a tremendous tumult in the young man's soul. He drove to the cemetery in the same carriage as Judge Morris and the two girls, and it was lucky for him that the occasion was such as to impose a great restraint on conversation. Otherwise he would hardly have been able to keep from betraying himself by his silence or by his inconsequential answers. But Lotta's intense power of intuition did not fail her, and she was not at all deceived. She desired with all her heart to inform him of what she knew and suspected regarding Constance's position. But being a well-bred young lady, brought up to be strictly careful never to inquire into subjects of a personal nature, she felt that she could do nothing but hope that Dayton would voluntarily speak to her. But perhaps he had already talked with her brother? Still, William did not know much, and was a boy anyway, and so would not be able to help Dayton a great deal in such matters.

At the conclusion of that solemn service which closes with impressive finality a human being's connection with his fellow mortals, the large crowd slowly moved towards the gate of the cemetery. On arriving there, our party noticed James Glover in Lotta's car, evidently waiting for her. It was found that Mrs. Ellson wished Estelle and Lotta to come up for dinner that evening. So the girls got in,

THE ACCIDENT

secured Dayton's company as well, and sent the judge back to the house alone in the carriage. The latter smiled goodhumoredly at the desertion. It was found necessary, however, to turn the car's head also in the direction of the judge's house, in order to obtain some things which the girls desired to take with them.

All the way out to the farm Dayton continued to debate within himself what action he should take in the face of the impending crisis. Lotta had shown herself at Malton's a person of so much maturity and power of sympathy that he felt impelled to talk with her on some aspects of the matter at least. He thought also of speaking to William, but decided that it would be better first to discover what a girl would think and advise. Knowing that he could absolutely trust Lotta, he considered that it would be foolish not to avail himself of whatever help she might be able to give. Once he was tempted to consult Mrs. Ellson, but, with the feeling natural to youth, shrank from discussing such a matter with an older person. Perhaps, if his mother had lived, he would have felt less reticence towards ladies of mature age.

When they drove up before the house, William came out to meet them. Dayton took advantage of an opportune moment to say to Lotta, "Could you let me have a talk alone with you some time before we go back to the city?"

"Why, yes, Dayton, gladly. I shall speak to mother, who will see that we are not disturbed. How long do you want?"

"About half-an-hour. I wish to ask your advice."

"Advice is very cheap, Dayton. So I'll give you

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

all I can. We shall be able to have the conference in the downstairs library."

"I am very grateful to you, Lotta."

It was still some time till dinner. William was seen after a little while to take his mother and Estelle to inspect some marvellous new improvements at the barns. Lotta smiled at Dayton as they went out.

"Mother and I are just like sisters," she said. "I told her that you wished to talk with me alone about something important. At once she volunteered to look after Estelle."

"You are both exceedingly kind to this poor stranger. I suppose we can begin the conference at once?"

"No, not here, Dayton. It will be more dignified in the library. There is a lovely fire burning this evening."

It was, indeed, very cosy in the library. The season was so far advanced that a bright fire was something to be appreciated. The walls of the room were lined with books almost to the ceiling. Mr. Ellson had been a very studious man. William had once told Dayton that in one or two departments the library was unique in the country. The young people's love of books was evidently an inherited taste.

They sat down before the fire.

"Do you remember the first time we met, Dayton? What a beautiful day it was. I have been a faithful sister, have I not?"

"Yes, you have been the best of sisters and friends. That is the reason why I have decided to talk with you about a matter that is causing me very great anxiety. It is about Miss Lyman."

THE ACCIDENT

"That is strange. I wanted to speak to you about her, too."

"I see that there is a question in my sister's eyes. I answer 'yes.' Isn't that a confession?"

"I knew it. I seem to know everything about you. I am not sure how I learn. I suppose I guess right about things. Flava Sheldon thinks you are in love. No one else has the slightest suspicion, except perhaps William."

"Has Miss Sheldon ever talked with you about Miss Lyman and me?"

"Yes, she is much worried about Constance and wishes you to interfere, if you really love the poor girl. She wanted me to ask you, but I said I could not do that. But I do not know how long I could have held out, if you had not spoken to me to-night. I should, however, have asked mother's advice first."

"Did Miss Sheldon suggest any definite plan of action for me to follow?"

"No, she did not. She just said that you ought to interfere. She repeated the words two or three times."

"What did she think was the cause of Miss Lyman's trouble?"

"She thought that for some reason Constance was being forced into an engagement with Mr. Charters."

"Did she know that Miss Lyman is engaged to Mr. Charters?"

"No, neither of us knew that. We thought Mr. Charters liked Pauline Grandis, and so nothing was settled. Flava was very angry about it. She said it would be terrible for Constance to marry a man who either was or pretended to be in love with another person."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

"Dó you not think now that his conduct is even worse?"

"I have no words to describe it, Dayton. I can imagine what Flava would say, if she knew."

"I am afraid that some great crisis is now approaching, and I should very much like to interfere, but I cannot see any effective way of doing so."

"I wish I could advise you. Shall I ask Flava?"

"Is Miss Sheldon absolutely trustworthy? I am simply asking for information. I have no reason to suspect her at all."

"Yes, Flava is entirely to be trusted. I know her very well. She is always extremely good to me, and talks to me as if I were quite a grown-up young lady, the way you and William do. She appears to speak freely about things to people, but it is always about matters that are not important. About really serious things she is as silent as the grave."

"Very well, Lotta. Ask Flava in what way she thinks I can best interfere."

"I shall certainly do so to-morrow, when I go back to Royaltown, and I shall tell you as soon as I can."

"Are you not going back this evening?"

"No, Estelle is. But mother wants me to stay till to-morrow. I am having a delightful visit with Estelle this week, but I try not to forget mother, who is here alone."

"You are the loveliest of sisters, Lotta, and the best of girls. There is only one that can be compared with you, she who is at this moment unhappy."

"You are the handsomest of brothers and the best of young men. There is only one that can be compared with you, and that is William."

THE ACCIDENT

He was about to ask, "And nobody else?" but he was restrained by the inexorable custom in the Ellson household of respecting one another's individuality, even in trifling things.

"The conference may now be considered at an end, Lotta, and I thank you very much for being so kind as to listen sympathetically. I feel relieved already to think that there may be a possibility of doing something soon. It is too much like a nightmare to be compelled to stand still in your tracks, while the merciless automobile of Fate runs you down."

They clasped hands as a token of mutual confidence, and went out of the library to meet the others, who had just come in from witnessing the adaptation of all kinds of new ideas to farming operations.

"What an interesting time we have had, Lotta!" exclaimed Estelle. "Your brother has shown us everything that could be imagined agriculturally."

During the rest of the afternoon Dayton noticed that Mrs. Ellson seemed to treat him in such a way as testified to a delicate sympathy with him. That Lotta had not said anything to her mother about the subject of the conversation in the library, he was quite certain, for to do so would have been entirely foreign to the Ellson character. He had not asked or suggested that what he said should be revealed, and so he knew that it would remain a secret. Otherwise, Dayton would hardly have dared to discuss the matter, for he was, like most true men, sensitive about such things. Even to hold communication with Flava, the most intimate friend of Constance, was distasteful. He submitted to this from force of grim necessity and as a last resort.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Though the members of the Ellson family lived an intensely individual life, each one having his own thoughts and feelings, yet there were such bonds of love and sympathy between them, that each seemed to read and know the mind and heart of the others in a way that was entirely marvellous to a stranger. Dayton believed that he had observed again and again the results of such a power, and wondered if it was a manifestation centuries earlier of that which would be a common faculty in some future age of the world. However this might be, it was evident that Mrs. Ellson and her daughter possessed to the full the delicate sense of intuition belonging to their sex. Consequently, he was not by any means surprised that his hostess appeared to understand that he was in the midst of some difficulty.

In the evening James Glover drove Estelle and Dayton back to Royaltown in Lotta's car.

Dayton was about to take up his abode in his newly-furnished residence. He intended leaving the hospitable home of the judge this same evening. So, bidding good-bye to Estelle at her door, he crossed to his own house. This, though not nearly such an imposing dwelling as the one which had been destroyed by fire, was very comfortable, and suited better Dayton's modest tastes. He had had it thoroughly overhauled and adapted as much as possible to his particular needs. On one side of the building had been arranged his own special suite of rooms. In the front was a library, a large, beautiful room, from which a private stairway led to his sleeping apartment in the story above. Back of the library were two smaller rooms. The first of these was a sort of office having a telephone and communi-

THE ACCIDENT

cating directly with the outside by means of a side door. The one next to it was intended to be used as Gav's bedroom. Dayton, although he very much missed the lad's cheerful presence, had given him a long holiday, so that his mother might have her family about her during the first period of her bereavement.

Dayton made an inspection of the whole house with much satisfaction. The servants gave him a hearty welcome. They were glad that there was to be no change in the household arrangements, and that everything was to go on as before the fire. Dayton's aunt had maintained her establishment on a scale of some magnificence. When the young man took charge, he was at first inclined to live in a more modest style. But seeing that everything went on with a beautiful order beyond his understanding, and being afraid of causing confusion, he had postponed the day of radical change. In the end he had grown used to his surroundings, and had given up all serious thought of the simple life. Smith, who lived in anything but a luxurious way, sometimes rallied Dayton on the size of his household.

"But what am I to do, Mr. Smith?" he would say. "The machinery runs smoothly as it is. I am afraid to touch it for fear of dire calamity. Of the servants, some have grown grey and fat in the service, and others find here a convenient resting-place, as they move in employment from one house to another."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONSTANCE.

THE shelves in his library were rather bare of books as yet, but Dayton had been in conference with a dealer, and expected soon to see a filling up of the desert spaces. In the office he found a number of cases that had already arrived, and were awaiting the moment of unpacking. If Gav could have been present, Dayton would have enjoyed taking out the volumes and placing them on the shelves. In the absence of the boy the work was somewhat fatiguing and monotonous. He might have called another servant, but decided to essay the task in a dilettante way, and, if he should at any time light upon a book of compelling interest, to suspend operations without compunction.

After laboring for some time, he came upon a number of new works on astronomy. The subject had always held a good deal of fascination for him, and he looked at the volumes to see if any were such as to be readily intelligible to the lay mind. He found some that appeared genuinely interesting, and was soon absorbed in the perusal of the latest theories as to why, whence, when, and how this orb of change came into being. The chairs in the office were comfortable, the books were numerous and within easy reach, and he had gained temporary relief of mind in the afternoon through his talk with Lotta. Conse-

CONSTANCE

quently, the hour of midnight came and passed and he still remained reading. The blinds of the windows in the office had been forgotten by the servants and had not been drawn, and thus he could be readily observed by any one who might happen to pass along the walk at the side of the house.

Suddenly he was interrupted by a timid knock at the outside door. For a moment he did not realize what it was. Then the sound was repeated. He threw down his book, arose, went to the door, unlocked and opened it, and perceived a woman closely wrapped and veiled. Without a word she entered. Dayton stood aside in some surprise. Perhaps not caring to reveal herself in a room where she could be observed from the outside, she passed with a somewhat hesitating step through the door into the library. Then in spite of wrappings and veil Dayton thought he recognized something familiar in the figure. But suddenly the woman seemed to stumble, then stagger forward, and she would inevitably have fallen if Dayton had not rushed up and caught her in his arms. She remained inert, for she had swooned away. Dayton tore off veil and wraps, and, with a start, recognized the face of Constance, pale as death itself.

He endeavored to bring her back to consciousness. There was a little water in a glass on the table, and this he promptly dashed in her face. He loosened her clothing at the neck with a strange thrill of possession. His efforts were rewarded by a slight return of animation. At last she opened her eyes, which gazed at him for a moment with surprise and then went wild with terror. Dayton was afraid that she might relapse into the unconscious state, yet she did not. He continued to hold her in his arms, speak-

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

ing soothingly to her. She was evidently suffering from nervous strain and fright.

"Dear Constance," he said. "You have come to me at last, and you should consider yourself quite safe here. Henceforth you will leave all anxiety to me. I shall bear it for you." He kissed her several times on the white lips.

At length she appeared to be a little better. Dayton placed her comfortably in a reclining chair. He went upstairs to his bedroom and searched out a bottle of a preparation which he had found useful in one or two cases on the football field. It really had quite an excellent effect as a simple restorative. He was glad that he possessed this, for there was nothing else at hand, and under the circumstances he did not care to risk waking the servants.

After a spoonful or two of the medicine, Constance seemed much improved. She was evidently also making a great effort to control herself. At last she spoke to him. Dayton at first wished her not to exhaust herself by talking but she insisted, saying that she must tell him why she came.

Then in broken words, sometimes with long intervals between, she told her story. Mr. Charters had come into her life very gradually. She had been kind to him, because she knew that he was a valuable man in the company's business and that her father trusted him implicitly. One day he had said to her:

"Miss Lyman, I have a proposition to make. Would you like to hear it?"

Quite unsuspectingly Constance expressed her willingness.

"Do you not think it would be a great thing for us to get hitched?" he asked.

CONSTANCE

Poor Constance was utterly amazed. But she answered simply that she did not care for him in such a way as would make it right for them to be married.

"That makes no difference," he replied, "if we are agreed upon tying up to each other."

But Constance believed it made all the difference in the world.

"Not in the present case," he said. "There is a good reason for our getting together. The business of your father's company was in poor shape when I took hold of it. We have since vastly extended the sphere of operations, and the number of our customers is going up by leaps and bounds. Now you will see what a great thing it will be for your father if matters are so arranged that I shall have a deep personal interest in the prosperity of the company. On the other side, I myself shall gain by being assured of deriving due benefit for my expenditure of time and labor in advancing the company's interests. You will at once see that our marriage will be very advantageous for both of us."

Constance was so astounded that she could only weakly answer that she was not the only child. There were her brother and also two sisters who were married and living elsewhere.

"Oh, that difficulty can easily be provided for," explained Mr. Charters. "A settlement can be made which will be satisfactory to your brother and sisters, especially if the future brilliant prospects of the company are kept dark from them. We are on the eve of a tremendous business expansion."

Constance had by this time recovered sufficiently to be able to say emphatically that she would have nothing to do with such a base scheme.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Mr. Charters argued his point for a considerable time, and, when he found Constance obdurate, began to threaten.

"Since you are not willing to look at this matter in its proper light, I am forced to explain to you that your father has made himself liable to criminal proceedings by his lack of care in signing certain documents. Of course, as long as the company is solvent there will be no danger of prosecution, for while payments are being properly made no one is going to ask for an investigation. But should I suddenly withdraw from the service of the company at this moment when huge expenditures have been made and returns have not yet begun to come in, disaster is almost inevitable. I alone am acquainted with the large number of details upon the due attention to which success absolutely depends. I feel that I cannot in justice to myself continue to carry this weight of responsibility and labor unless I have a direct interest in the prosperity of your family."

Every word of this harangue seemed to burn itself as with a hot iron into the soul of Constance. Her father committing a criminal act and only escaping because nobody had yet suspected it! Suddenly she was struck with the thought of the villainy of the man before her. She charged him with being responsible for whatever her father might have done. He would suffer equally if her father were thus ruined.

"Miss Lyman, it is useless for you to speak of my responsibility or lack of responsibility in this matter. I might be called as a witness to testify, but I am in such a position that I either should be quite

safe from prosecution or should be able to claim the protection of the court."

Constance urged that he give her fuller information, but he refused on the plea that the matter was so complicated that he would not be able to make it clear to her. He then said it was fair that he should leave her time to think the matter over, since it was not wise for her to act in haste. But he intimated that if she refused to consider favorably the question of their marriage he would at once resign his position with the company and allow matters to take their course.

It will be imagined that poor Constance was thrown into an agony of doubt and apprehension. To her further dismay it was just at this time that she came to realize her love for Dayton. She tried to gain some information as to business affairs from her father. What she was able to learn seemed to bear out the assertions of Charters. Plans for great extensions were being carried out. These had been suggested by Charters. A large amount of money was required. This had been borrowed on easy terms in consideration of the splendid financial condition of the company as set forth in certain statements which had been signed by himself but had been prepared by Charters. It was fully expected that the profits from the great increase of business would in the course of a few months compensate for the heavy outlay. Charters knew everything about the matter and was confident of marvellously successful results. He could on no account think of parting with Charters, as this person alone of all his men seemed capable of dealing with the details of so large a business.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Such was the information gathered from two or three conversations with her father. How she wished that she could speak plainly to him and reveal the details of the base plot! But her father's affairs were already so involved that her very warning might bring on at once the dreaded calamity. Mr. Charters at length pressed for a final answer, and Constance, after a vain effort to persuade him to abandon his purpose, finally consented to an engagement.

"We can never be happy," she said. "You are destroying your own happiness and mine by insisting on this. If you were content I know my father would reward you handsomely for your services."

"Never fear, Constance, dear, we shall be as happy as larks and as rich as Jews. This is a great day in our careers."

When Charters was talking business he was direct and effective in speech. It was only when he essayed the lighter language of social life that he made himself ridiculous.

Now came a period of torment for Constance. It was a mercy, however, that Charters regarded his engagement as entirely a matter of business and did not trouble her much by his presence or by a desire for the intimate relations of betrothal. When Pauline came upon the scene, Constance began to see more of him. He acted very strangely. Sometimes he was talkative and sometimes rather moody and silent. Flava had told her about his attentions to Pauline. When she heard of the matter she fell a prey to an extraordinary conflict of emotions. If Charters abandoned her in order to marry Pauline, he might force her father into some terrible position, for she could hardly expect that he would tamely surrender

his advantage. Therefore, strange to say, she hoped that he would remain true to his engagement and yet at the very same time did not cease to regard with the most intense loathing the prospect of their approaching marriage.

Without warning the blow fell. At a late hour on the present evening he had called and had announced to her that he now saw she was right and their union could never be a happy one. So their engagement might be considered at an end, for he was confident that she desired its continuance as little as he did.

Anxiously Constance asked him regarding her father's position. He replied simply, "Your father and I will have a little settlement of accounts. I think he will find it to his advantage to behave generously."

Constance could not fail to notice his menacing tone. She begged him to have regard for her father's good name. But he would make no promises, and when she continued to entreat him, walked straight out of the house. His action threw her into the greatest terror. She dared not speak to her father. She remembered how she had promised to come to Dayton if she ever was in great difficulty. She now craved his advice and assistance. Perhaps something could be done to free her father from the power of this terrible man.

This was the story of which Dayton learned the important points from Constance's often interrupted sentences. It filled him with the fiercest anger. To think that this noble and delicate woman should have been secretly tortured for months by such a despicable villain! He felt hot words rushing to his lips,

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

when he thought of what she must have had to endure.

But her present condition compelled him to be moderate in his expressions of reprobation. He recognized that she was in a weak physical state. Therefore, he contented himself with comforting her by the assurance that he would certainly set matters right and reduce Charters to a condition of humility.

"It is fairly certain," Dayton said, "that a case cannot be made out such as any one would dare bring before a court of law. So, Constance, you are to dismiss all fear of anything like that. Besides, I shall call on your father at his house to-morrow morning, before Charters can get at him, and we shall draw up a plan of campaign. And now, Charters being definitely off the stage, we are from this moment fully and finally engaged."

He put his arms round her and kissed her. She kissed him unreservedly in return.

But she was very weak. She rose, intending to make ready to go home, but almost fell. Dayton caught her.

"You must not try to leave to-night," he exclaimed. "You must stay here. I think I can make such arrangements as will prevent our being talked about, though I must say that I feel rather indifferent, now that I really have you as my very own. I'll telephone for Lotta Ellson and her brother to come down. They are absolutely trustworthy, as you know. I suppose it would not be wise to alarm Mrs. Lyman, because she has such weak nerves ever since her accident."

Dayton was, in truth, rather anxious that no one in the Lyman household should have knowledge of

CONSTANCE

the state of affairs until he had fully formed his plans for the coming crisis. He had had one experience in endeavouring to warn Mr. Lyman of Charters' real character, and he had learned therefrom that it would be necessary to proceed with considerable caution or Charters would win, owing to his knowledge of the weak side of Mr. Lyman's nature.

Carefully replacing Constance in the reclining chair which she had just quitted, and assuring himself that she was comfortable, Dayton kissed her and told her that he would go back to the office and telephone to the Ellson young people. She smiled faintly up at him and said that she would consent to anything he thought was best. "I hand over my poor life to you," were her words. "I am going to trust entirely to you." Then she closed her eyes, and Dayton, in order not to disturb her while he was using the telephone, shut the door between the library and the office.

He had to wait a short time before an answer came. It was certainly Lotta's voice.

"Who is it?"

"I think it is you, Lotta, is it not?"

"Yes, I am Lotta. I believe it is you, Dayton."

"Yes. Would you wake up William and both of you come to my house. Somebody is ill here, and we must have you."

"May I ask who it is, Dayton?"

"The person we spoke about at our conference in the library."

"Con—— How terrible! We'll start at once or as soon as ever we can. I'm not dressed, you know. I came down in the dark from my room when I heard the telephone. I'll knock at William's door

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

and tell him. I'll put a note in mother's dressing-room, saying that you sent for us. Good-bye, Dayton."

"You are kindness itself, Lotta. When you come, enter the house by the side door without ringing. Good-bye."

When Dayton returned to the library, Constance opened her eyes with a brave smile, but she was evidently far from well. He would have liked to summon a physician at once, but thought it would be wise to await the coming of the Ellsons. They would certainly arrive in half an hour's time, if no accident happened. He looked at his watch. It was now one o'clock. He sat down beside Constance and held her hands gently, occasionally speaking, but he would not allow her to talk. Once or twice he gave her some of the simple medicine, which allayed certain slight symptoms of nausea.

Before long quick steps were heard on the walk, and almost immediately the door of the office opened. But Dayton had already gone to welcome his friends. In a few words he told them exactly how matters stood. The servants were on no account to be aroused till morning. It was to be understood that Constance had taken suddenly ill while in Dayton's company, and it was thought wise by himself and his friends not to alarm the Lyman household during the night. Lotta then went into the library, while Dayton and William remained behind in the office to arrange about summoning a doctor. It was decided to telephone for Dr. Jones, who had the reputation of being the most thoroughly discreet physician in the city.

CONSTANCE

Lotta, as soon as she came to Constance, put her arms about her and kissed her.

"Are you very ill, dear?" she asked.

"No, not ill, just weak and tired."

"Now that I have come, I think I'll put you in a bed, if we can find such an article of furniture in these apartments. If I remember right, Estelle and I noticed one back of the office, when we were going over the house the other day, before Mr. Woodford moved in."

"Mr. Woodford doesn't want me to go home till to-morrow."

"No, you are not able, Constance, and then your mother would be nearly frightened to death, if she were aroused at this hour. We can tell her all about it quietly in the morning, when you have quite recovered."

"You are very kind to come all this way. Did Mr. Woodford tell you anything?"

"Yes, he said he was engaged to be married to the loveliest girl in the world, and that you were she." Lotta kissed Constance with great glee, as she said this.

"What a little flatterer you are, Lotta! It is not wrong for me to stay here, now that you have come. I feel as if I could give up all thought of everything."

"That is what you must do. Think of nothing but your handsome lover until you go to sleep."

Dayton and William now came in, and Lotta made her suggestion as to putting Constance to bed. It was decided that this should be done as soon as the doctor had examined her. In a short time Dr. Jones arrived. Dayton, on hearing his step outside, went

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

to the hall door and admitted him. The young man explained in the briefest manner that Miss Lyman had taken ill while at the house, and it was thought best by him and his friends not unnecessarily to alarm her parents.

"You have acted rightly, I can assure you," said the physician. "It would not be well to excite Mrs. Lyman's nerves so soon after the shaking up she got from the Wallace nag. I suppose there are some lady friends with her. You'd better have her stay here till morning. I fancy that you will have some way of accommodating her."

"Yes," said Dayton, "one of my servants, who is to sleep in the front part of the house, has not yet returned. His room is available. We are not disturbing the other servants, who have received permission to retire early to-night, because they have had a hard day. We have just moved in, as you know."

By this time they were entering the library. The physician examined the patient thoroughly.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "symptoms of long-continued nervous strain. You've been having too good a time, Miss Lyman, or too bad a time, perhaps both. Young people try their best to kill themselves by over-excitement. They must have all kinds of frolics, melancholics, and sometimes alcoholics. You will know which you have been indulging in most." He laughed good-naturedly in spite of the vigor of his language. "But your case is not a very bad one. You have a good constitution. Nothing seriously wrong with it. All you'll need is rest, plenty of rest. Consider the lily of the field and the cabbage of the garden, and vegetate for a while. Have not a

CONSTANCE

thought beyond proper nutrition, and you'll be restored to perfect health in a short time. Now, my dainty little friend, Lotta,"—the big man patted her on the head—"will act the part of your maid and put you in bed, where you are to sleep soundly till morning. We'll see that the folks at your house are told in due time where you are."

With the assistance of Dayton and Lotta, Constance was taken to the room which she was to occupy for the night. When the young man came back, the doctor, after giving him some brief instructions, wrote out two or three simple prescriptions. He then left the house, accompanied by William, who intended going to the nearest drug store to have the prescriptions filled.

Dayton sat down and tried to think out some plan of operations whereby he might outgeneral Charters on the morrow. In a little while Lotta came to him.

"How is Constance?" he asked, anxiously.

"She seems restless and her eyes have a strange hunted look. I think if you would come in, it might help to quiet her."

So they entered the room together. Constance was lying in bed, her face seeming white even against the pillow. Dayton's presence appeared to reassure and comfort her. She smiled. Lotta was about to leave the room, but Dayton motioned to her to remain.

"Lotta and I will sit here together," he said to Constance, "until you decide to go to slumberland. William has gone for some medicine which no doubt will have some ingredients intended to hasten gently your departure to that delectable country."

"You are very good, all of you, to this sick girl."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK.

"It is strictly forbidden for Constance to talk, is it not, Lotta?"

"Yes, Constance, Dayton and I are perfectly competent to do all the talking that is necessary."

But after all nobody said anything. All three remained silent, until William came in with the medicines. These were administered according to directions, and in a very short time the watchers were gratified to see the patient sink into a peaceful sleep. They quietly withdrew to the library, leaving the intervening doors open so that they could hear if Constance stirred. Lotta also went in now and again to see that all was right. William was persuaded, after entreaties from Dayton and sisterly urging from Lotta, to make use of Dayton's bed upstairs, and have a few hours' sleep.

Lotta occupied the reclining chair which Constance had quitted. Dayton sat not far away, ruminating at intervals over the coming contest with Charters. He took down a volume from a shelf and refreshed his memory as to a point of law. At last he was satisfied, and dismissed the matter for the time.

As the night wore on, and all continued quiet in Constance's room, Lotta became drowsy and closed her eyes. Dayton, from where he was sitting, had a clear view of the fair young face. As he looked at her, he thought of all the kindness she and her family had shown him in the last few months—what boundless hospitality, what absolute good faith, what delicacy of feeling! Now that Constance had come and given herself to him, he felt that he was the happiest of men, blest in the love of his betrothed, blest in the devotion of his peerless friends. The affair

CONSTANCE

with Charters on the morrow he looked forward to in much the same way as a warrior of old time must have been accustomed to regard an approaching combat in the lists. How could he entertain a doubt of success with both love and friendship to bless the rightful cause? His feelings toward Charters were somewhat mixed. For Charters as Charters himself and single he entertained only sentiments of contempt and loathing. But to Charters as the future husband of Pauline, he was inclined to show some consideration. Pauline had been steadily friendly. She had taken him entirely into her confidence. And most wonderful of all, was it not through her that the engagement had been broken and that he now had Constance's promise? Though he could not help disliking her, yet he felt it his duty to be kind to her, and this, of course, meant merciful treatment for Charters.

Dayton was in the midst of these reflections when Lotta slowly opened her eyes. As soon as she saw that he was looking at her, she smiled slowly and sleepily.

"As tired eyelids upon tired eyes," quoted Dayton. "Do you remember our lotus-eating on Ellen's Isle?"

"Yes, that was the first day we met. It was truly a day worthy of such an event. I want always to keep it as an anniversary. When you and Constance are married," she smiled mischievously, "I'll invite you as the guests of honor for the day, and we'll all three eat some of the lotus."

"I accept the invitation for my wife and myself," replied Dayton, in the same spirit. "We shall be

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

both delighted to be the guests of Princess Lotta." Then he added, "I did not tell you that I had a dream on that memorable day."

"I suspected that you had experienced something unpleasant," said Lotta.

"Yes, it was a very disquieting dream, and marvellous to relate it is coming true."

He recounted it briefly.

"That is very strange, Dayton. But, like most dreams and omens, it after all does not tell us what the end will be."

"Yes, and even if it had clearly told us the future, we could not trust what it professed to reveal. There seems to be no reliable way of discovering what is behind the veil. A friend of mine once told me that occasionally before important events in his life he would have remarkable premonitions. He said that it was surprising how many of these came true, but there was a certain proportion that proved to be false. Consequently, he could place no definite reliance upon the phenomenon. They were like will-o'-the-wisps of the mind. For a man who had some belief in the occult he was extremely rational."

"Did your friend believe in ghosts?"

"No, he did not. He classed the belief in ghosts as a vulgar superstition. It was very interesting to hear him talk. He really made out a case against ghosts and in favor of premonitions. But I always lost myself in a fog, when I tried to follow him. Perhaps my dream proves he was right."

William now appeared from the stairway.

"I hear talk of ghosts," he said. "Let all such fancies, as the bats of the night, flee away. Behold, it is morning, my friends."

CONSTANCE

He raised the blinds, and the pale daylight streamed in.

"It is really the morning," exclaimed Lotta, "and Constance has not stirred."

The young girl went over and stood beside her brother. They both watched the gradual progress of the dawn.

"What a picture is suggested to the mental eye," thought Dayton. "The noblest of the human race watching for the sunrise of the golden time of the world."

After a while everybody sat down, and began to form plans for the day. Lotta and William were to remain in charge at the house. William at a suitable hour would inform Mrs. Lyman, and bring her over to see her daughter. It could then be decided when it would be best to take Constance home. Dayton, meanwhile, was to devote all his energies to checkmating Charters in whatever moves this gentleman might make.

Dayton knew that Mr. Lyman was an early riser. So it was not long until he called up the house by telephone and had a message sent to the bedroom.

Very soon an answer was received.

"Is that you, Mr. Woodford? You want to see me on important business? Come across and have breakfast with me. We'll talk it over during the meal.

"Would like to see me at once, you say? Very well, come right over. We'll deal with the matter on an empty stomach, if you like."

Constance had been a little while awake and was feeling very much better, although it was evident that she was anxious in mind. Dayton went in and

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

kissed her, notwithstanding the presence of Lotta.

As that young lady looked at him rather roguishly after they had left the room, he said, "All is fair in love, Lotta, and now for war!"

Mr. Lyman was waiting in his den.

"A melancholy place in the early morning," the older man remarked, "but it is the right spot, if what you have to say is of a confidential nature."

Dayton, knowing Mr. Lyman's weak side, was determined to go straight to the point. He would endeavor to put forward his views in such a direct, vigorous way that there would be the least possible danger of a feeble yielding to Charters' demands, which no doubt would be sufficiently exorbitant.

"Your daughter Constance," he said, "has consented to become my wife, if I obtain your permission. I need hardly say that I am conscious I am asking for the possession of a priceless treasure."

"Mr. Woodford, what you tell me delights me very much. I had no idea that you and Constance cared for each other. I shall be glad to have such a son as you. My own boy is away at college now, and probably will not settle in Royaltown after graduation. My two sons-in-law do not live here. But I understand that you intend to remain permanently in this city."

"Yes, Mr. Starr and I are going into partnership shortly. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you that you are willing to accept me as a son."

Then almost abruptly the young man plunged into his story. He related the full details of Charters' villainy, described the intense suffering the man had caused Constance, and emphasized the fact that Charters had formerly been engaged in crooked dealings.

Mr. Lyman said almost nothing while the story was being related. He acted like a man suddenly crushed by a great blow. There was serious danger that he might give everything up for lost and throw himself on the mercy of Charters, which certainly would not be tender. So the lawyer discussed the legal aspect of the case in a very hopeful way, in fact, scoffed at Charters' pretensions, and concluded by saying that it might, however, be advisable to give a sop to the fellow in order to prevent petty annoyance.

"That is your full and frank opinion, Mr. Woodford?" Lyman asked at last.

"Yes."

"Since you are going to marry my daughter, I know that your advice must be honest. Otherwise, I should be inclined to reject it and trust to the honor of Mr. Charters."

The "honor" of Mr. Charters sounded very strange in Dayton's ears. Certainly Charters had an effective way of hypnotizing his victims. And yet, after all, Lyman's attitude was hardly to be wondered at. He had for some time been so accustomed to rely upon his assistant that when the prop was suddenly shown to be worse than worthless, he was entirely at a loss what to do. But for the fact that Dayton stood in a new relationship to him, and that he was thereby shown other means of assistance, he would have been ready to yield to Charters' uttermost demands rather than run the risk of throwing his business into confusion. Even as it was he had moments of hesitation, but he was overborne by the force of Dayton's stronger nature.

Breakfast was eaten almost in silence. Dayton

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

did not speak of Constance's illness. Mrs. Lyman was not present.

After the meal was over the two men went to the offices of the company. They found Charters already at work, giving the day's orders to the various superintendents.

When Lyman and Dayton had entered the former's private office, they sat down and waited silently for some time. Charters would, under ordinary circumstances, have come to his superior at the first opportunity, but it was evident that as matters now stood he intended to remain away until Dayton left.

"Shall we send for Charters, Dayton?" Lyman asked, using the younger man's Christian name for the first time.

"Yes. I suppose he is purposely staying away."

"Very well." He rang a bell, and a boy came in.

"Tell Mr. Charters I should like to see him as soon as he is at liberty," he said to the lad, who went out immediately.

"I shall rely upon you entirely, as my legal counsel and son. I do not see the way clear myself."

"I am confident that we can easily deal with the man, if we do not permit ourselves to be bluffed. At least we shall try to get an idea of what cards he holds before we decide on doing anything definite."

Almost at once Charters entered.

"You wished to see me, Mr. Lyman?" he asked, after making a slight bow to Dayton.

"Yes. I have been looking over the affairs of the company, and it is possible that I shall decide to make some changes. Have you any to suggest?" Charters, who had started a little at the first words of the sentence, brightened up at the close.

CONSTANCE

"Yes, I have a few to suggest, and I shall be very glad to discuss them with you at another time."

"I think the present occasion would be very suitable. So, if you will be so kind, we shall take up your suggestions now."

Charters looked at Dayton.

"Would it not be better to defer their consideration for a little?" he suggested.

"No, Mr. Charters, I said 'now.'"

Charters straightened himself up.

"Not while that Yankee lawyer is here," he said.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Charters, I should have introduced Mr. Woodford to you as my future son-in-law."

"Constance's intended?" Charters asked, in a startled way.

"Yes, will you kindly proceed, as Mr. Woodford will henceforth act as my legal adviser."

Charters began to look hot. He was plainly far from comfortable.

"We are waiting, Mr. Charters."

Having evidently made up his mind that bold counsels were best, Charters proceeded to outline a plan which would have put him practically in control of the affairs of the company, and would have effectually eliminated Lyman.

At the end Lyman asked, "On what do you base your claims for such unusual consideration?"

"My absolute necessity to the prosperity of the company and even to its solvency. No one else is acquainted with the details of the business to such an extent as it is needful to be, if bankruptcy is to be avoided." He then mentioned the great outlays

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

that had been incurred and the necessity of a large increase in sales in order to meet these liabilities.

"What is your advice, Mr. Woodford?" Lyman asked, turning to the lawyer.

"That the services of Mr. Charters be from this moment dispensed with," was the reply.

Charters was thunderstruck.

"I have a yearly contract," he said.

"You will receive full payment according to the terms of your contract," Lyman assured him.

"But—can I not—finish to-day's work?" Charters faltered.

This gave Dayton an idea. Could it be that the man's scheme had not yet been perfected? Perhaps Charters did not hold the cards after all. At any cost he must be kept away from the company's books and papers until they could be examined. Of course it was possible that there was some risk in thus driving him to extremity. But Dayton thought it advisable to incur what slight danger there might be, for it was to be believed that Charters would scarcely dare to allow his conduct to be reviewed by a court-of-law. The fellow's talk as to his services being indispensable to the company Dayton did not take seriously. In fact, the young man had already told Mr. Lyman that he had a friend in New York who had been manager of a company in a similar line of business, and had been very successful. This person would, probably, be ready to come and take charge, if he was informed of the great opportunity which would be open to him in the conduct of the affairs of the Lyman Manufacturing Company.

During the time that these thoughts had occupied in flashing through Dayton's mind, Lyman had been

looking at him inquiringly. The lawyer was delighted to see that his client was remaining firm thus far, although some slight signs of hesitancy and apprehension were to be observed.

"In my opinion, Mr. Lyman, it is important that Mr. Charters should discontinue his duties at once."

But Charters did not move.

"If my services are considered to be of no value," he said, menacingly, "I may state simply as a matter of information to Mr. Woodford that the affairs of this company will not stand investigation. It may be my painful duty to inform the creditors that all is not so fair as it looks on the outside. Perhaps there may be proceedings of a criminal nature to be instituted in due course."

Dayton saw that Lyman winced. He began to be afraid that the older man might yield, if Charters followed up his advantage skilfully. On a slip of paper lying on the table before him he wrote, "I will stand by you to the full extent of my fortune. D. W." This he passed over to Lyman. Then he said, "I should advise that the books be at once examined by competent persons, and that an exact statement of the affairs of the company be prepared for inspection by the creditors and the courts-of-law, in case such should be necessary."

Lyman read Dayton's note and gave him a grateful glance. Then he spoke.

"Mr. Woodford suggests the only proper course, if anything is amiss, as you charge, Mr. Charters. Everything that I can do to set matters right will be done. If I have been weak and neglectful, I alone will bear the penalty. Whatever wrong may have been committed by me has been committed unwittingly."

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

tingly. My conscience is to that extent clear. You may go now, Charters. We'll pay you what is due on that contract of yours in any case."

Charters turned ashy pale. He hesitated, made a step or two towards the door, then came back and dropped upon a chair dejectedly.

"You are not going to send me to jail?" he asked, in a piteous tone.

"Why, Charters, man, what is up?" exclaimed Lyman. "You have just been hinting of my going to that place of retirement."

"If you have the books examined you will find that I have taken some of the company's money, I don't know how much exactly, ten thousand dollars or more."

"Good heavens! Charters, have you been acting the thief all this time, while you have been threatening my daughter and me? You *are* a scoundrel!"

"Have mercy on me, Mr. Lyman! I did not intend to take it. But I was compelled to, because they were forcing down the stocks I held."

"The stock market again! You're a confirmed gambler, Charters. But let us have the story."

It could be told very briefly. Charters had tried mining stocks this time, chiefly Cobalts. He knew that "La Belle Marie" was a good proposition, but before he could realize on it, for some unexplained reason the stock began tumbling, as if there were no stopping it. At last he was completely cleaned out. Prior to this and before he had touched the company's money, he had had some other losses which had absorbed all his own funds and had left him in debt.

"'La Belle Marie' did you say?" exclaimed Day-

ton. "My aunt held a tremendous amount of that stock. I did not know anything about mines, and so I gave instructions to sell out. It would seem that I acted all unknowingly in the nick of time."

It must be said that Lyman and Dayton listened to Charters' tale with a good deal of relief notwithstanding the further revelation of the man's rascality and the loss of the money. But the question now was, how were they to act under the circumstances? What was to be done with Charters? Dayton, who felt pretty strongly, did not think it well to make any suggestion, fearing that he might be actuated by a desire for vengeance. Moreover, as he had gained his purpose with magnificent success, he thought that he might properly leave the further conduct of affairs to the head of the company. The upshot of the matter was that it was decided to treat Charters leniently, if he would give full assistance to those who might be called in to examine the company's books. His chief punishment would be the loss of his situation.

"I don't want to make matters too hard for you, Charters," said Lyman to him. "If you will help to straighten out the tangle which you have made for us and thus allow us to see exactly what our position is, it will be your own fault should any further trouble arise for you. But you don't deserve mercy. You are a scoundrel and a gambler, as I have already told you. You may have run us pretty close to the financial rocks. But I think we'll make port safely with a change of pilots."

Lyman was by nature a hopeful man, and he was not vindictive. Charters, after making effusive promises, retired with great humility. When he was

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

gone, Lyman said to the young lawyer, "Dayton, you have done the finest morning's work for me that any man has ever done. If you had not come so promptly and stood by me with such excellent advice, I do not know what might have been the result."

Dayton now related what he had before omitted, namely, the fact that Constance had herself come to him late the night before, had fainted, and had been compelled to remain at his house till morning. He went fully into the details with which the reader is already familiar.

"This is dreadful! Did that fiend reduce my poor girl to such a condition? And I was so blind as not to observe anything! If I had known this before I should not have been so gentle with Charters."

"Dr. Jones thinks that there is no serious physical trouble, because she possesses a good constitution. But her mental sufferings have been extreme."

"Her going direct to you, Dayton, was what saved the situation to-day. We have had a narrow escape. She is an heroic girl. She is just like her grandfather. It was he who built up this business out of nothing. He was wonderfully energetic, strong-minded and capable. It was only a couple of years ago that he died. Mentally vigorous he remained to the last moment."

Very happy at heart the young man left the office and hastened to his home. There he found William installed in the library, and absorbed in the perusal of some recently-published scientific books.

"How did it go, old man?" asked the latter.

"It was a famous victory. The enemy is routed,

horse, foot and artillery, and narrowly escapes incarceration in the common jail. Where are the ladies?"

"When Mrs. Lyman arrived it was decided to take Constance home. Lotta went over with them, and will spend the day, I suppose. I was waiting to report to you and hear the news, before going back to the farm."

"William, I am beyond all bounds grateful to you and your sister for coming to our aid last night. But this service is only one among the countless number that your family have already done me."

"Do not mention such trifles, Dayton. Among friends these things are to be considered as a matter of course."

"But I ought to be none the less grateful." Then, bethinking himself of the hour, he asked, "Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes, that stout gentleman with the air of a prince of the blood saw to it that I was almost overfed. He is very hospitable in his own lordly way."

Dayton laughed. "I am glad Edwards has not neglected his duties. The ladies did not remain for breakfast, I suppose."

"No, they left quite early, to the everlasting regret of my lord Edwards."

"Cannot you stay the morning and have dinner with me? I wish to tell you the whole dramatic story of the overthrow of Charters."

"You certainly do tempt me, Dayton. I should be pleased to hear how you succeeded in putting Charters *hors de combat*. I can also spend some further time on Professor Weiszalles' latest theories. I believe that I'll accept your invitation and stay. I

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

can make use of the telephone to tell mother where we are, and to give some instructions to the men."

As the two friends talked over the whole affair they were struck by one unexplained circumstance. Why did Charters, when he knew that he was financially ruined and in danger of arrest for embezzlement, break the engagement with Constance? They concluded that he probably reasoned in this way. His crime must be discovered before long, unless he could gain full control of the company's affairs. Now, if the theft of the funds were detected, Constance would certainly decline to have anything more to do with him. On the other hand, if he pursued the bold policy of breaking the engagement, he could be confident that either she would remain silent or she would, in her alarm, try to induce her father to yield to all demands. Charters could hardly expect that her first act would be to go to Dayton. Besides, Pauline's influence must be allowed for. The man was evidently very much in love. She had no doubt served him with an ultimatum. As a consequence, self-interest and Cupid seemed to be pulling in the same direction. Thus had Charters gone to his fate.

CHAPTER XIX.

"EVER AFTER."

A WEEK after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, Dayton was surprised to receive a visit from Pauline.

"I suppose you are astonished to see me," she said. "I am almost as much astonished at finding myself here. But we have been friends, and I thought I should come to you any way, no matter what might be the result."

Dayton said that she was always welcome at his home.

"I don't know whether you will say that after I have done with what I am going to tell you. To make a long story short, Mr. Charters and I were married yesterday."

"I must congratulate you warmly, Mrs. Charters. The announcement of such a happy event could hardly make a difference in my esteem for you."

"I know you are too straightforward a person, Mr. Woodford, to say such a thing for mere politeness' sake. You are very kind to me."

He fancied that there might even be tears in her eyes.

"I mean every word I have said, Mrs. Charters. I have nothing but good wishes for you."

"I must explain," she replied, "that I did not know until this morning how my husband had acted. A few days ago he said he had fallen out with Mr.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Lyman, and had lost his position. He was very much depressed. I told him that I was sure everything would go well after all for a man who had such business ability as he. But I could not brighten him up. After a lot of talk it was agreed between us that we might as well get married now as later. If nothing turned up here, we could go west to British Columbia. There would be sure to be an opening in some new town. So we were married quietly yesterday. This morning I said to Mr. Charters that I believed you might be willing to help form a company, if you knew that my husband would be a member of it. I knew that Mr. Charters had a great reputation as a business man. Then he told me the real story of the trouble with Mr. Lyman. I was thunderstruck and did not know what to do. It put an end to my fine plans completely. But at last I made up my mind to come to you any way to ask your advice. Of course Mr. Charters blames you for the failure of his plans. But I think you did right, and I can't excuse Mr. Charters for the way in which he has acted."

Dayton felt himself in a dilemma. He was strongly and righteously indignant at Charters for the despicable part that he had played. He could never forget the sufferings of his betrothed. And yet would he care to remember all his life that he had refused to look further into the man's case and discover what had been the cause of his moral undoing? Charters could not be wholly evil. Perhaps he had been simply overcome by the intense desire to become rich quickly. Before Dayton decided upon what course to pursue he resolved to question Pauline.

“EVER AFTER”

“Mrs. Charters, will you object if I ask you to tell me your frank opinion as to the cause of your husband’s unfortunate actions?”

“No, Mr. Woodford. I have come here to talk plainly and openly with you, for I have always trusted you as a perfectly honorable man. My belief is that my husband is not naturally dishonest. A person with his good sense and ability does not readily take to stealing. But he has always been so intensely anxious to get rich that he stops at nothing when he fancies that he is about to lose money. If we go into any business, I shall take control. So he will not be able to waste our capital by gambling in stocks. I think what Mr. Charters has needed is somebody to manage him.” She smiled faintly.

“You are evidently a very energetic woman, Mrs. Charters,” Dayton said, “and you will probably make a good man of your husband, if you can keep him out of the stock-market and kill the spirit of covetousness that I am afraid possesses him. But I cannot conceal from you the fact that I feel pretty strongly against Mr. Charters.”

“It is quite right that you should feel angry with him. I, too, am indignant at the way in which he has acted. But he is my husband, and I shall do my best to help him as far as I know how.”

“You have a brave spirit, Mrs. Charters, and I admire you for it. Strange to say, I have made money out of some of the stocks that have been the ruin of your husband. But do not imagine that it was through superior wisdom. I did not know anything about the things. My aunt had held them. I sold out as soon as I came into possession. You probably have heard that I am moderately wealthy.

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

My father is of opinion that for a young man I have too much money. Now, I am disposed to offer you sufficient financial assistance to enable you to establish a business. I shall lend the money directly to you. If you cannot control Mr. Charters, and the business goes into bankruptcy, I shall not make any claim. If you can keep Mr. Charters in order, I am confident that with his ability you will be successful, and I shall expect to be repaid. Do you not think that this arrangement will be fair?"

"You are quite unbelievably good, Mr. Woodford. I should never have expected such kindness after what my husband has done."

"This is how we shall proceed. You will talk the matter over with Mr. Charters and decide upon what line of business you prefer to enter. You will also determine the amount of capital that is requisite. I engage to supply you with a sufficient sum to set the concern going."

"I don't know very much about money, Mr. Woodford. But I suppose it will take a large amount. If I borrowed it I might lose it all and cause you great inconvenience."

"No, Mrs. Charters. I shall lend you only some of the ready money which I have on hand at present. A little while ago I realized on some securities that I was afraid might not prove to be very good. The market was excellent at the time, and I came off fairly well."

"We shall, however, ask you only for a small sum. We can begin in a modest way."

"It will be well not to begin too modestly. Your husband has been accustomed to dealing with big things, and I think it would not be wise to try him

“EVER AFTER”

with a business on too small a scale. He would not have sufficient scope, and he probably would grow discontented and restless. I want to see you succeed. A few thousand dollars more or less do not matter. I am not fond of money. Besides, I shall charge you a high rate of interest, and if you repay me I shall have made an excellent investment.”

Mrs. Charters thanked him in a nice, womanly way before leaving, and for the first time Dayton felt a liking for her.

“I believe she rings true after all,” he said to himself. Then he smiled as he reflected that in the case of the two people for whom he had promised to do this generous act he cordially detested one and he had had till the present moment a feeling of indifferent dislike for the other.

“When a man is as happy as I am,” he thought, “he becomes either supremely careless of the sufferings of others or else strongly sympathetic with them. I am glad that I seem to be affected in this latter way.”

At once he determined to call on Constance and tell her what he had done in the case of Charters. He was received in a pleasant little room where a bright fire was burning, for the weather was damp and chill outside. Constance was now such as he had never known her. But to her old friends it was simply the return of the entrancing maiden of yore with even an added intensity of captivating charm.

“Constance, you are beyond all words lovely,” Dayton said. “I am dazzled at my wondrous good fortune. I do not see how I ever found courage enough to kiss you at first.”

“Dayton, I believe you are flattering me and just

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

pretending in order that I may ask you to kiss me. But I'll do something better. I'll kiss you myself instead. Now sit down by me here and tell me if you and Mr. Starr have that office ready yet."

"I think the office is ready now. I shall leave my place with Allan, Fraser, Fraser and Allan in a short time. Starr and Flava will be married to-morrow, as everybody knows. It is well that you and I are to be first assistants to the bride and groom respectively, for we shall be prepared for our own experience with the matrimonial rite. What are Flava and you going to wear?"

"I did not know that boys cared to know such things or would understand if they were told. I do not believe that you really want to know, but I will punish you by describing everything in full." Here followed a description which is not given. We shall simply remark that the most fastidious persons spoke of the "creations" as "dreams," such as it seemed hardly possible could be brought to pass on earth and at the hands of mortal dressmakers.

At the close she asked with a mischievous look:

"What are *you* going to wear?"

"The same old thing. No man can be gorgeous nowadays. Smith, however, made a suggestion the other day. He said that I should arrange to have the star-spangled banner introduced into the color-scheme of my apparel. The suggestion is worthy of consideration. I can stand for John Bull's criss-crosses, but when you Canadians add a general collection of animals, plants and machinery to the old gentleman's quaint design and ask me to respect your flag, I faint at the effort. Therefore, I remain faithful to Old Glory."

“EVER AFTER”

“I suppose, Dayton, we shall conclude to have international peace in our household,” Constance said, laughing at her lover’s humorous remarks.

“Yes, there will be a permanent treaty of arbitration which will not need ratification by the senate.”

Then he told her about his lending the money to Mrs. Charters.

Constance turned pale and sat for a time thoughtful.

“I know, I feel, that you are doing right, Dayton. I have suffered untold tortures, but I am so happy now that I should not like anybody, even him, to be unhappy. It might be a blight upon our lives if we disregarded the call for help of a person in danger of perishing, though he might have done us a great injury. I am sure that you are acting well. Besides, Pauline has certainly not been to blame.”

Flava’s wedding was an astoundingly brilliant affair. The society reporters ransacked the stores of the English and French languages for a sufficient supply of adjectives.

“Would it not have been advisable to put in a few Japanese phrases as well?” remarked William as he glanced over the account in the social columns.

“Boys never appreciate a nice description of a wedding any way,” answered Lotta. “I suppose it is because nothing much is said of the groom beyond mentioning his name.”

“You are quite right, my dear sister. If Starr’s physiognomy and sartorial outfit had been fully and intimately described all the men in town would have read the report with great relish, the descriptive phrases would have been on everyone’s tongue, and copies of the article would have been posted up in

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

the street cars, railway stations and public offices for the delectation of the populace. Here is one more proof that the fair sex has but an indifferent sense of humor."

"If you were not the best boy in the world I should be very angry. Here, I'll take that paper from you and sit on your knee until you withdraw your base slander."

"Very well, dearest Lotta; anything for a quiet life. I suppose your head is full of the Woodford-Lyman affair."

"Yes. It is the first time in my life that I have been asked to be a bridesmaid, and I have a great deal to learn about just the best way of doing everything. You will have to polish up your manners if you wish to escape my criticism when I have learned all properly."

"For the present I must think of 'polishing off' an article which Smith has asked me to write for his paper in reply to some criticisms that have been launched against me in the *Polar Star*. I did not know I had so many failings in which the public was interested until I entered the political arena."

"Whenever I notice an attack upon you in a paper I immediately quit reading it and throw it into the fire. Is not that loyalty to your cause?"

"Yes; you are a perfect model of loyalty. Here is a kiss. Now run away, most faithful of followers, and allow me to take my pen in hand. But there goes the telephone. I suppose it is Smith."

The date set for the wedding of Dayton and Constance rapidly approached. Flava, meanwhile, returned with her husband from a very enjoyable and wonderfully expensive trip.

“It was to be my last taste of luxury,” she said. “So I was dreadfully extravagant with the darling bundle of traveller’s cheques that father supplied me with. Now for the joys of poverty and comparative obscurity! I hope my old friends will not be too aristocratic to call upon me occasionally.”

Flava lived up to her resolve and did keep house in an economical manner. Starr leased a neat little dwelling from his father-in-law. Flava insisted that the proper amount of rent should be paid. She decided that it would not be within her means to keep a servant. A woman was engaged to come in on certain days and perform the heavier work.

“Sometimes I want things very badly,” Flava confessed to Constance, “and then I can hardly keep my hands off my private bank account to which father keeps continually adding. He says temptation will overcome me yet. But I have resisted thus far. Thank goodness, Mr. Starr says business at the office is brisk and my worst time of trial will soon be past. But the discipline will be good for me. I’ll really know what genuine, old-fashioned dependence on one’s husband means, and that, I think, is a good thing for any woman to learn. It completes the marriage ceremony and makes you truly one with your life-partner. Your future husband, Constance, is so rich that you will not have this beneficial training.”

Dayton’s father came up a few days before the great event. The majority of Dayton’s friends were at the railway station to meet him. The first snow had fallen and all the air was merry with the jingle of bells. The little boys and girls were dancing about, sometimes pelting each other joyously with soft

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

masses of the snow, and sometimes half-burying themselves in its white depths. The older people greeted each other cheerily.

"It looks as if we are going to have good sleighing this winter," one would say.

"An excellent thing for business," another would remark.

In fact, the whole city swarmed with vehicles bearing the rich produce of the countryside.

Publicly the Canadian will solemnly protest that his native land can in no sense be characterized as a realm of snow, the presence of that article being almost a negligible phenomenon. Privately he thanks heaven for this beneficent product of his climate, and when he is disappointed by old Boreas he is grievously distressed, for he suffers alike in business and in pleasure.

When the elder Mr. Woodford alighted from the train he received an affectionate greeting from his son. He was then made acquainted with Constance and the others. "I am a little disappointed in this Eskimo country," the old man remarked, brimming over with good humor. "As I came north and observed the snow-banks growing deeper and the ice on the car windows growing thicker, I began to wonder what a real ice palace and domestic igloo would look like, and whether I should relish the taste of seal oil. But everything appears very usual hereabout. I should not know I had reached the neighborhood of the Pole if I did not see those Eskimo papooses—I suppose you have some native name for them—using this strange white material with which to wash each other's faces."

“EVER AFTER”

He shook hands with everybody, and tried to remember all the names.

“What a handsome lot you Eskimo ladies are! If I had known the true state of affairs when I was younger I might have made a polar expedition long ago. But I have left the enterprise for my son, and you see how successful he has been.”

Everybody laughed merrily. Then he received unnumbered invitations to visit at various households and enjoy the pleasures of life in the north.

“My friends, I should need the lifetime of a Methuselah and the energy of our late President to do my part in this extensive programme. But I thank you all, and up to the limit of my powers I am willing to enter upon such of your boreal delights as are suitable to my age.”

Then he got into Dayton's sleigh with Constance and Lotta and was borne rapidly away.

“I know you all so well,” the old man said. “My son is a good letter-writer when he takes the fancy, and he has kept me pretty well posted of late. It seems to take a good many years off my head to see you young people beginning your life. I wish your mother could have lived till now, Dayton. But she is gone so long, so very long ago.” He sighed. Thoughts of his own happy union, quickly severed by the hand of death, came back to him at the sight of his son's bride. But soon he brightened up, saying, with a twinkle in his eye:

“I am glad Dayton was able to make a choice amid such an embarrassing number of beautiful ladies. If I had been in his place I might have hesitated so long that in the end I should have been unable to find any one who would accept me.”

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

It was evident that he loved his son and was delighted at his happiness. He made amusing comments on everything as they passed.

In front of Judge Morris' house Constance and Lotta alighted, as they intended to pay a call upon Estelle. Dayton then drove in at his own gate.

During the days that followed, the elder Mr. Woodford rapidly made the acquaintance of his surroundings. He held long talks with his son, combining the grave and the gay in his remarks, as was his wont.

"You keep up a princely establishment here," he said once. "The first time I met that fine stout gentleman you have on your hands I remarked to him, 'Hello, old sport! How are trumps?' But his imperial dignity was not in the least disturbed. He did not deign to answer. At last, after a few further friendly observations on my part he unbent sufficiently to converse, but it evidently was an effort. Still, by degrees I have been able to rise to his level or he to sink to mine, and I have found that his ideas are narrow, but he possesses a few."

Dayton was very much amused at this account of his father's experience with the taciturn Edwards.

"For a young man you are too rich," Mr. Woodford would sometimes say. "You are in danger of becoming either careless of pursuing a career for yourself or over-ambitious or avaricious, according to the special variety of weakness you may chance to have. You should endeavor to regard your wealth simply as an insurance against sickness or old age and as a fund for the exercise of generosity. As regards all else you ought to proceed as if you hadn't a dollar. If you are capable of performing this gymnastic feat, riches will do you no harm."

“EVER AFTER”

One day he came in with a greatly pleased expression upon his face. As soon as he found his son, he began:

“I had an interesting time this morning. I saw an establishment down town displaying the name of Charters. As I knew from you that your friend was in business, I decided to go in. Everything looked prosperous. Plenty of customers about. A tall, energetic lady seemed to be busy in one part of the building. As soon as she saw me she came forward, called me by my name, and introduced herself as Mrs. Charters. ‘I knew you at once,’ she said. ‘Your son is so much like you.’ At the first glance I felt confident that Charters had made no mistake when he married that woman. She will make a man of him, if anybody can. She seemed very glad to see me, took me about, and showed me everything with pride. Finally, she led me up to the office, where I was introduced to Charters the Great. I fancy that his tone must have moderated since the time when you used to describe him in your letters. He expressed his pleasure at meeting me and told me about his prospects. ‘Our retail department,’ he said, ‘is only a subordinate division of our business. We are developing an extensive jobbing trade with dealers in some of the smaller towns. It is very profitable if you look after the details carefully.’ Then his wife said proudly, ‘We shall soon be able to pay off a certain part of the capital advanced by your son.’ This was news to me. I did not know that you had gone so far as to give your former adversary financial assistance, though you told me that you and he had buried the hatchet with due ceremony. When the lady found that I did not know

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

the full story she told me all about the affair. Dayton, I was very proud of you. You have a good heart and a good head as well. It is never safe to help the really serpentine type of man. If such rises to affluence he is a danger to the community. But Charters is not that. He has been simply afflicted by the itch for wealth, and now that he is cured of it he will become a prosperous, respectable citizen and an honor to his town. All that I have observed thus far of your conduct leads me to believe that my homilies are not seriously needed, and that there is little danger of riches spoiling you. I have a little sum saved up myself, and I was in doubt as to what to do with it. I was afraid to let you have it, for I believed that you already had all the money that was good for you. I was considering the advisability of bequeathing it as a fund to establish a new religion or found a society for the promotion, repression or suppression of something. But now I have decided to draw up my will as soon as you are married and leave half of my property to you and half to the beautiful daughter you are giving me."

Dayton was pleased to hear that, in his father's opinion, he had acted rightly. As a matter of fact, he had doubted much whether it was really advisable to help such a man as Charters. He protested, however, that he did not need any more money. It would be better to give it all to Constance. But his father thought proper to keep to his first decision.

Mr. Woodford, accompanied by Dayton, visited the Ellson farm, and experienced the wonderful charm of the life of that happy household.

"You are right," he said to his son afterward. "I am quite as enthusiastic as you over that young

“EVER AFTER”

Ellson. He is a man ahead of his time, and yet capable of living successfully in his own generation. There you have the definition of the practical reformer. Some persons are fitted to be martyrs, the fires of whose burning are the beacon-lights of progress. But how many martyrs have suffered vainly, because their cause has not won the regard of those who can lead humanity! Ellson will certainly effect something worth while if he goes on as he has begun. After you have heard him talk you feel ashamed that you are a member of a community so easily humbugged in matters that concern the higher civilization. What a lovely child his sister is! Mrs. Ellson is splendid. I do not know that I have ever seen before such a rare combination of learning and practical sense. I am of opinion that her children are largely what they are because of the inspiration imparted by their mother.”

The older man never grew tired of seeing his son and Constance together. He would watch them with calm delight. Constance often came and sat beside him.

“You are a beautiful woman,” he would say to her, “as beautiful as God ever made, my daughter. I am a prosy old fellow, and I like to sermonize. Dayton is used to me. In fact, he might not like it, if I were to change, because he would no longer recognize his father. But I can’t help being different with you. I shall not give you the least advice, my child. Your loveliness somehow takes hold of me and makes me keep silent. I am continually thinking of Dayton’s mother during these happy days. Perhaps she sees us now from some far-off place where she abides, and rejoices with us.”

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

Time went rapidly by until arrived the eve of the important day, when there was held in the offices of the *Earth and Mars* a banquet, in order to mark in a fitting manner the close of Dayton's bachelor life. A choice company of yet unmated young men were present. The mayor, who was understood to be permanently unwed, presided with fitting dignity. Morris came to town for the occasion, as well as Constance's brother. The legal fraternity was represented by young Briefer and Fraser. William Ellson, of course, was present, and likewise the energetic and imperturbable Smith. Stephens of the *Polar Star* ventured into the sanctum of his rival to do honor to the guest of the evening. Others there were who have not figured in this story, but who were none the less well known to Dayton.

What a jubilant occasion it was! There was no sadness of farewell. The general feeling was that the young man was "not lost, but gone before." Though a few speakers referred to him as a "sheep marked for the slaughter," yet the more frequent tone was one of congratulation. The great speech of the evening was made by Smith, as might have been expected. We regret that it cannot be given in full. One highly oratorical passage was as follows:

"All that I have said thus far, gentlemen, leads us to the conclusion that it is imperative upon us to favor more stringent regulations. We must have a tariff, a prohibitive tariff, against handsome young men coming from the United States of America. How else can the native variety of youth be protected in its inalienable rights? Is it proper that the plums, the peaches, the daisies, and the roses among

“EVER AFTER”

the fair sex should be snatched away before the aching eyes of the young men of the country, who henceforth see nothing before them but the cheerless vistas of enforced bachelorhood?” (Cheers and sighs.)

It was on a beautiful winter's day that the wedding took place. The sunlight was flashed back from myriads of crystalline spangles on earth's great mantle of snow. Through this glorious scene the joyous party drove to the church which Constance had nearly all her life attended. But what need is there to describe the many details of the happy event? Have we not all read about it in the columns of the metropolitan papers, even if a copy of the special edition of the *Earth and Mars* has not come our way?

After the ceremony was over, Lotta whispered to her friend, “You looked very lovely, Constance, and I thought that Dayton appeared so handsome and noble,—every inch a man. I know that you will both be truly happy.”

Numberless were the good wishes expressed by the guests at the wedding breakfast. Then followed the tumultuous preparations for departure.

At the railway station the chief of police came up to Dayton, and after congratulating him, drew him for a moment aside, to the great amusement of all who noticed the incident.

“Mr. Woodford,” said the officer of the law, “that murder mystery is at length explained. The last individual of a gang of young fellows who have been hanging about the outskirts of the city and living on robbery or petty thieving, was gathered in last night. He told me that he helped the man who did the killing draw the body out of the water at daylight the next morning, and take it off in a boat. They

THE HEIR FROM NEW YORK

threw it into the lake at some distance from land, having first possessed themselves of the portable arsenal and burglar's supply house which they found under its clothing. The man who was killed and the man who killed him were members of a bad gang some years ago. The former had been sent to jail for a term and, blaming the other gentleman for his unpleasant experience, swore vengeance. So the murderer probably acted in self-defence. The appearance of your automobile frightened him, as he thought a search might be made later. Hence he hastened to have the body removed. Of course he ran some risk of being caught, although the shore at that point is completely deserted on ordinary occasions."

"Did you learn the murderer's name?"

"Yes, it was David Malton."

Dayton was thunderstruck.

"You will not publish the name out of consideration for the family. They are innocent people. I know Malton himself died repentant."

"The name is to be kept secret. Only you, Smith and I know it, except, of course, the young vagabond."

A newsboy ran up, shouting, "Extry! *Earth and Mars!* All about the murder mystery and the Woodford-Lyman wedding!"

Dayton smiled and bought a paper.

"Smith gives the whole story except the name," the chief said. "Now, Mr. Woodford, all kinds of good fortune for the bride and yourself. Don't forget to send some picture postals of your travels. I'll make use of them to brighten up the office. Good-bye."



